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# Julius Caesar And The Rhine River: The Evolution Of A Border During The Gallic Wars

Todd Roman

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JULIUS CAESAR AND THE RHINE RIVER:  
THE EVOLUTION OF A BORDER DURING THE GALLIC WARS

By

Todd Roman  
Bachelor of Arts, University of North Dakota, 2004

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

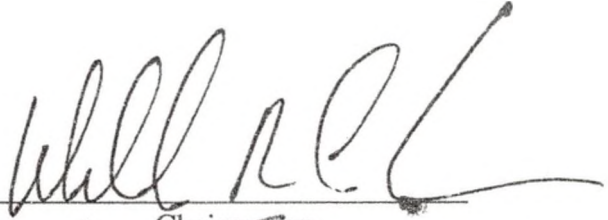
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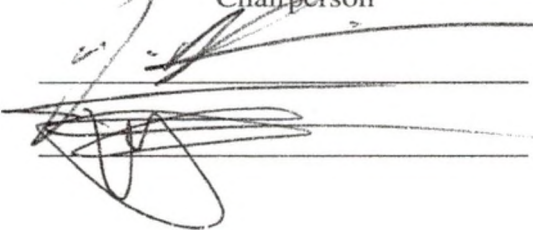
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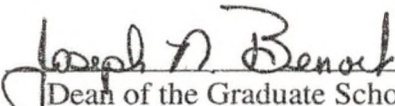
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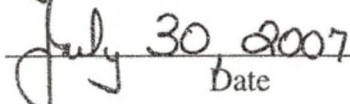
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the use of the Rhine River by Julius Caesar in his commentaries, *De Bello Gallico*, covering the Gallic Wars of approximately 58 to 52 B.C., to identify the peoples and territories separated by its current. This thesis addresses the issue of how Caesar understood this division of space, what criteria he employed to support his use of the river, and his portrayal of these matters within his account. It seeks to clarify the foundation of a major national border of western history in the context of its initial involvement in the context of the Roman Late Republic.

This thesis approaches the question of Caesar's use of the Rhine from a literary perspective. It places an emphasis on contemporary sources and Caesar's own text, with the aim of understanding their rhetorical value as applied to the identification of unfamiliar groups and places. It adopts as its principal theoretical framework a model in which ideas of identity, civilized customs, and foreign relations operate to clearly demarcate areas and communities regardless of specific contacts or military campaigns.

This thesis concludes that, contrary to how such a border is thought of today, the Rhine was understood to be an ethnic border after the later campaigns of the Gallic War had discredited its original political aspect. First employed to separate those with whom Rome had close relations from those with whom it did not, the Rhine evolved both during the conflict and in the texts into a cultural divide between groups based on their possession of what the Romans considered civilized habits.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Whether one thinks of war in terms of propaganda or body counts, few wars in western history are as infamous as those of Julius Caesar. The Gallic War is particularly well known because of Caesar's own account, the *De Bello Gallico* (*BG*), which details the conflict in seven books (with an eighth written by one of Caesar's lieutenants). The conflict began in 58 B.C. with an influx of Germani into a portion of Gaul inhabited by Rome's allies, and ended in 52 after the end of Gallic resistance to Roman dominion. The Gallic War extended Rome's sphere from the Alps and the Rhone to the English Channel and the Rhine, entirely incorporated the various Gallic groups, and excluded the Germani, who were left on the outside fringe of Rome's influence. The Rhine River, which was of limited significance at least through the first years of the war, would become the classic western border of Rome during the Principate and the traditional dividing line between Gaul and Germany in western history. These political and geographic consequences of Caesar's proconsulship in Gaul are one reason that the Gallic Wars and the *BG* attract so much attention among western scholars. A second reason is the text's demographic impact. Through his reporting, Julius Caesar established the distinctions identifying the inhabitants on either side of the Rhine River.

This paper examines the *BG* to determine the principal stages of development in Julius Caesar's Rhine policy and its ethnographic impact. The Rhine River acted first as



a political barrier between communities and evolved into an ethnic dividing line, juxtaposing *Gallus* and *Germanus*. This becomes evident when Book One is compared to the text's later books. As Caesar's military goals changed, the function of the Rhine expanded as an element in dealing with his opponents. Caesar's differentiation between the Galli and the Germani, the criteria used, and the power relationships represented all evolve throughout the text. This thesis will argue that the roles of both the boundary and the ethnic distinctions originated in a relatively limited, politically difficult campaign along Rome's immediate frontier. The evolution began when Caesar returned to the Rhine in 55 B.C. during a later phase of the conflict and with new, if similar, goals. In short, this paper will argue that Julius Caesar used the Rhine River as a political rather than a strictly geographic border to both understand and identify Rome's new frontier zone and its inhabitants. This is a study in perception, identification, and the objectification of ethnicity within an evolving military and political context.

The *BG* is the earliest extant text that provides any rationale for limiting Rome's dominion to the Rhine. There seems no reason to presume that the Rhine was ever a natural border. Indeed, archaeological studies and traditional historiography have both consistently noted the porous nature of the border – the natives on either side had traditions of migration and contact, while Roman commanders, including Caesar, crossed the river in several campaigns well into the first century A.D.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the overall consensus of the textual sources is that Germania was not subject to Rome in the fashion that its

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<sup>1</sup> Both archaeological and philological investigations have demonstrated that the river was neither a cultural nor an ethnic divide. See Malcolm Todd, *The Northern Barbarians 100 BC – AD 300* (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd, 1975), 19-29, 45, footnote 53; Susan P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 76, footnote 176; Barry Cunliffe, *The Oxford Illustrated Prehistory of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 428.

provinces, such as Gaul, were. Rome's traditional enemies, the peoples stressed in speeches and artwork, were largely Gallic during the Republican period, but Germanic in the Imperial. Thus, as the first text to record the evolution of west-central Europe and its inhabitants in Roman perception, and one of few documents focused on provincial matters during the Late Republic (c. 80-27 B.C.), the *BG* provides vital testimony as to how the Romans organized their world.

This thesis views the text as a conscious argument by Caesar, made in a political context, and therefore relevant to both his perceptions and his goals. While this approach evades the question of the *BG*'s historicity and the objective course of the Gallic War, the broader context requires explanation. One cannot employ the *BG* as a source without taking a position on a number of related issues. This study's argument is fundamentally dependent on the content of the text coevolving with contemporary events. It is thus inextricably linked to the theory of periodic composition, which assumes that the *BG* was not originally composed as a unitary text after Caesar's victory but book-by-book over the duration of the conflict. This theory, which will be discussed in detail below, has always had adherents among scholars but has possessed the burden of proof since all extant manuscripts are finished copies. The theory of periodic composition better explains the evolution that this study observes within the text than competing theories, so it is adopted. To reflect this perspective, the plurality of Caesar's campaigns will be stressed, as both his theatre and his opponents ranged broadly during the conflict, the Gallic Wars. To tie this paper into a broader theoretical framework, a discussion of some essential matters of the modern historiography follows.

### The Subject – A Difficult War



The Gallic Wars took place at an awkward juncture in the context of Roman imperialism. A period of civil war had ended with Sulla's victory decades earlier, Rome's attention remained on the Mediterranean and Pompey's eastern dispositions, and the (now obvious) rivalries within Rome had not yet exploded into a second period of civil war. The Gallic Wars also sit astride opposing trends related to very different sociopolitical periods and prevalent structures, namely the Republic with its aristocratic competition and the Principate with its imperial centrality.<sup>2</sup> Caesar's professed motives for the Gallic Wars suggest the older, traditional view of Roman imperialism that emphasized a reluctance to provoke battle or take territory, but a determination to defend existing positions.<sup>3</sup> Yet Caesar's own accounts also imply an openly imperialistic mindset, one driven by desire for personal glory, material wealth, and political control.<sup>4</sup> There is also the geopolitical factor behind the war, that it was sparked by a threat to Rome's dominion, but pursued haphazardly due to the independent decisions of Caesar, including whom to fight and where, rather than being waged with any consistent strategy

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<sup>2</sup> The transition is typically but not always characterized as a revolution and had several dimensions. See Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939) for a predominantly social perspective of this change, in which new classes from Italy replace the old Roman elite with new values and interests; P. A. Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) for a political argument, in which the Italians are viewed as the same classes as in Rome, and thus only the membership is new; Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Mutatio Morum: The Idea of a Cultural Revolution," in *The Roman Cultural Revolution*, ed. Thomas Habinek and Alessandro Schiesaro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Christine Meier, *Caesar*, transl. David McLintock (New York: BasicBooks, 1982), 491-496.

<sup>3</sup> Tenney Frank, *Roman Imperialism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914); P. W. M. Freeman, "Mommsen through to Haverfield: the origins of Roman studies in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain," in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, discourse, and discrepant experience in the Roman Empire*, ed. D. J. Mattingly (Ann Arbor: Cushing-Malloy Inc., 1997). Cf. Sall. Cat., 6; E. Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, second edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968). Ironically, the proponents of "defensive imperialism," especially Frank, viewed the Gallic Wars as Rome's first truly offensive war.

<sup>4</sup> William V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327-70 BC* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 21-26, 98-99; John Rich, "Fear, greed, and glory," in *War and Society in the Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1993); J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

or oversight from Rome.<sup>5</sup> The question, in short, is how to understand what Caesar was doing and why. The fact that one of the actors composed the primary account is a blessing, in that the rationale provided (discussed in detail in Chapter Two) suggests the mentality involved. In the 50's B.C., Rome's provinces, the territory directly administered by magistrates, were often surrounded by allied or dependent groups. The web of these diplomatic, commercial, and military ties extending outward from explicitly claimed territory created a frontier zone. The inhabitants of the frontier zone were social and political intermediaries, distinct from both those under Rome's direct administration and those living outside.<sup>6</sup> This concept of the frontier zone best accounts for the goals Caesar professes and the actions he takes, as the migration of peoples into this region attracted his involvement due to the threat of upsetting existing relationships. The creation and later modification of Caesar's Rhine policy was to protect the prestige, treaties, and the goods that flowed between Roman territory and those within the frontier.

Employing the concept of the frontier zone, the relevant portions of conflict can be described as follows. In his campaign against the chieftain Ariovistus (58 B.C.), Caesar insisted upon the Rhine as the boundary not to be crossed by Ariovistus' followers, the Germani. The Rhine was at that point the territorial limit of the Sequani, for whom Caesar was acting as a patron. By using the Rhine to settle the smaller dispute, Caesar enclosed Gaul, completing a geographical region. His use of the Rhine also

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<sup>5</sup> J. S. Richardson, *Hispaniae: Spain and the Development of Roman Imperialism, 218-82 B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Arthur M. Eckstein, *Senate and General: Individual Decision-making and Roman Foreign Relations, 264-194 B.C.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

<sup>6</sup> Stephen L. Dyson, *The Creation of the Roman Frontier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). At first glance, this may seem a clarification of the defensive imperialism model, but it is far more complex as the frontier involves a mutual interchange between cultures and practices. For the army's role in the creation of this provincial class, see N. J. E. Austin and N. B. Rankov, *Exploratorio: Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1995), 91-102.



identified political territory and, since members of communities that benefited from a Roman patron were themselves defined as clients of that person, created the expectation of ethnic identity. The Rhine separated the “other” both implicitly and explicitly, because Caesar’s policy was not to permit any *Germanus* (a non-*Gallus*, a non-member of the communities within the frontier zone) into Gaul.<sup>7</sup> As the Gallic Wars progressed, the frontier zone became enlarged, and Caesar campaigned on a wider basis. His activity ranged to the Atlantic coast, along the way encountering hybridized peoples such as the Belgae and the Treveri, who lived as Galli but claimed Germanic lineage.

Beginning with the arrival of more Germanic immigrants, Caesar campaigned among these mixed peoples and the river for a sustained period (55 to 53 B.C.). Like Ariovistus before them, these new immigrants had no place within the frontier zone, but the presence of peoples who claimed to have been Germani within the expanded frontier questioned the old ethnic standard. Ultimately, Caesar distinguished the hybrids from the newcomers by emphasizing their differences from the Germani and similarities to the Galli within the initial frontier zone. Their right to exist within Gaul was demonstrated by their Gallic way of life (in Roman terms, their *humanitas* and *mores*), which could be incorporated into the new frontier. In other words, upon the conclusion of this second phase (55 to 53), the Rhine no longer divided political units in terms of friends and

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<sup>7</sup> The Roman concept of the “other” is difficult to identify, and one is often forced to retreat to a generic perception of not-like-us. As this paper operates within a framework that assumes some degree of social, political, and cultural ties among its subjects, and especially a Roman perception of familiarity of way of life, a definition of otherness can be attempted. An “other” was any group lacking in or of unknown quality regarding the relationships typical of the Roman world, such as membership in a recognized polity, client to a known patron, or willingness to pursue either. These relationships will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three, and draw upon the analysis of Roman ideas of civilization and identity as discussed in Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-23.

enemies, but rather ethnicities in terms of civilization. This outline based on a frontier concept will frame the narrative of this paper.

As this study relies overwhelmingly upon a single text, the nature of the document deserves examination. The value of the *BG* is its first-hand testimony, as Caesar was an observer for most of the conflict. This characteristic of the text makes it something of a rarity, given that so few ancient sources generally survive or remain intact, with even fewer by their own subjects. Unfortunately, these qualities are not entirely positive. Julius Caesar was the author, main actor, and the editor of the *BG*, at least regarding its content. The main purpose of the *BG* was to inform the Roman Senate, and as many prominent men as possible, of Caesar's activities. The text served Caesar's own political and class interests by promoting his reputation and strengthening his political position. Caesar did not write as a detached observer but as an active participant in public affairs, and the extant text likely originated in annual dispatches to Rome. The final form of an edited, published text provided pro-Caesar source material for those who would write histories and maintain Caesar's reputation through the ages. The text was composed neither to deceive nor to provide an objective account, but to support Caesar's own perceptions of events and arguments for his actions.<sup>8</sup>

The commentary, the genre of Roman literature of which the *BG* is an example, has no modern equivalent but shares the characteristics of both a political autobiography and a field report. In one of his letters, Cicero remarks: "An autobiographer must needs

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<sup>8</sup> For an introduction to Julius Caesar as an author, see R. M. Ogilvie, "Caesar," in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, volume two, *Latin Literature*, ed. E. J. Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 281-285. For a discussion of the *BG*'s place in the context of literary history, see Christina S. Kraus, "Forging a national identity: Prose literature down to the time of Augustus," in *Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, ed. Oliver Taplin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 311-335.



write over-modestly where praise is due and pass over anything that calls for censure. Moreover, his credit and authority are less, and many will blame him and say that heralds at athletic contests show more delicacy.”<sup>9</sup> Cicero’s opinion testifies to the intellectual environment in which the *BG* was written, delivered, and viewed. The Romans would have expected some omissions or glosses that modern readers may find unfortunate, or even unacceptable. As such, how one judges the *BG* as a source will determine not only how one works with its content, but what types of questions may be dealt with. This thesis is not primarily concerned with the text’s level of objective truth, but rather its political commentary. This subjective focus derives from a long-term trend in modern scholarship, one that has moved increasingly to accept Cicero’s opinion as a valid one.

#### Modern Commentators – Finding the Fiction

As suggested above, the Gallic Wars occurred at a difficult time within the chronology of the Roman world. Julius Caesar was in many respects the fulcrum for the transformation from Republic to Empire. As such, it is not unknown to view his life, career, and adventures in Gaul, not to mention the Rhine River itself, with a hindsight burdened by the existence of the Principate. Modern analysis finds the transformation deeply engrained in the Late Republic and thus tends to assume the process inevitable. Caesar and the Gallic Wars become a step in a master plan to obtain resources or gain power. Scholars effectively confuse the consequences of Caesar’s actions for his motivations. Indeed, the Gallic Wars are rarely a focus of study themselves despite the existence of a detailed account. The conflict is instead famous for when it occurred and who engineered it.

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<sup>9</sup> Cic. *Fam.*, 5.12, transl. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, New York, 1986.

The key pioneer of Roman historiography was Theodore Mommsen, who held an exalted view of Caesar, but less so of the Gallic Wars. As the founder of the now-outmoded idea of defensive imperialism, he had to differentiate between the man and the conflict more than has since become common. In doing so, he maintained a position that soon dropped out of fashion: "It is more than an error, it is an outrage upon the sacred spirit dominant in history, to regard Gaul solely as the parade ground on which Caesar exercised himself and his legions for the impending Civil War."<sup>10</sup> Perhaps not unexpectedly, the *BG* itself suggests this. Its first three books not only record overwhelmingly successful campaigns, but also a Roman proconsul seemingly (and perhaps apologetically) out of position to capitalize upon them.<sup>11</sup> Granting the text's rhetoric, the value of such testimony is largely dependent upon the likelihood of periodic composition, an idea that took time to achieve acceptance.

Interpretations of the Gallic Wars generally revolve around perceptions of Caesar, and twentieth-century scholarship has largely split along national lines.<sup>12</sup> English scholars tend to be sympathetic, emphasizing Caesar's good qualities and casting the Gallic Wars as a historically progressive conflict. French scholars emphasize Caesar's personal interests and denigrate both the *BG* and the conflict it records as manifestations

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<sup>10</sup> Theodore Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, transl. Reverend William P. Dickson, volume 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885), 257.

<sup>11</sup> One aspect of Caesar's decisions in the first few books of the *BG* that receives little attention was his attempts to leave central Gaul (not technically one of his provinces) for Illyricum (explicitly his responsibility). Illyrian tribes had been causing trouble through piracy since at least the second century. Several scholars have suggested, probably correctly, that Caesar expected to make his fortune in Illyricum from the beginning. Caesar had a tendency to assume that each spectacular victory had eliminated resistance. Caes. *B Gall.*, 2.7, 2.35, 3.1, 5.1. Even if one argues that any battlefield would fit into a proposed "program," the tone of the passages suggests that Caesar was most sensitive to not fulfilling his prescribed duties as proconsul in the provinces.

<sup>12</sup> These perceptions are often buried in the dialogue of imperialism. See A. N. Sherwin-White, "Caesar as an Imperialist," *Greece & Rome* (March, 1957), 36-45. Perhaps submitting himself to this observation, Sherwin-White argues (almost exclusively from the *BG* itself) that Caesar was not a particularly aggressive (or ambitious) imperialist.



of ambition. They tend to assume actual deception. German scholars focus most specifically upon Caesar, tending to cast him in the role of enlightened (or at least capable) autocrat both governing and governed by events. Overall, whereas Mommsen and contemporaries treated the *BG* in almost Boolean terms, the scholarly trend has been away from what Caesar described and towards how he described it.

The English historian T. Rice Holmes is perhaps the most distinguished commentator on the *BG*, and he is certainly the scholar with whom to disagree. Almost as literal-minded in his approach as Mommsen, Holmes argued for the text's overall reliability and general accuracy (if not total precision), especially in terms of geographic detail, lack of inconsistency, and general credibility.<sup>13</sup> Holmes' point of view remained dominant for decades, encouraging many scholars to use the *BG* freely as an archival or private source document without engaging its public nature. For Holmes, the validity of the Rhine border was based on a broadly correct interpretation of the pre-Roman state of Gallic and Germanic settlement and not an arbitrary creation of Caesar. Holmes also defended the integrity and basic objectivity of the narrative from aggressive French "sciolists," as some island scholars labeled their continental counterparts, who felt free to "correct" the *BG* when it made mistakes.<sup>14</sup> At this stage of scholarship, attention remained concentrated on the accuracy of Caesar's topographical descriptions while

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<sup>13</sup> T. Rice Holmes, *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul*, second edition (New York: AMS Press, 1971). Holmes provides the most recent full commentary (first edition 1899, second edition 1911, with reprints). Now accepted as unduly literal partly to his use of in-text proofs to settle disputes about the material, Holmes himself merely claimed a minimal amount of distortion, not a total absence of it.

<sup>14</sup> T. Rice Holmes, "Signor Ferrero's Reconstruction of Caesar's First Commentary," *The Classical Quarterly* (July, 1909), 203-215; T. Rice Holmes, "Signor Ferrero or Caesar?," *The Classical Quarterly* (October, 1910), 239-246; F. Haverfield, Review of *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul*, by T. Rice Holmes, *The Classical Review* (December, 1911), 257-258. "Sciolist" is Haverfield's term and is essentially an accusation of superficial quality of work paired with a haughtiness of manner, as if the French believed that they had discovered the *true* meaning of the text and others were merely imaginative children.

philology tested ethnographic divisions. A political aspect was assumed, but kept separate from the narrated events. Like Mommsen and major commentators before him, Holmes argued that Caesar produced the *BG* as one text, therefore limiting its propaganda content. The argument was that Caesar composed and published the *BG* on the eve of the civil war (c. 51-49 B.C.), so while it was definitely pro-Caesar, there could be little development in material (such as the character of one of his lieutenants) from book to book. Overall, from Mommsen to Holmes and many of their respondents, the *BG*'s narrative largely overshadowed its rhetorical content.

While English scholars accused their French counterparts of being superficial and too eager to attack, one French scholar, Michel Rambaud, offered a key challenge to the dominant approach to the *BG*.<sup>15</sup> He addressed the "compiled" nature of the extant text. Since its original composition and publication had a direct impact on Caesar's ability to control the perceptions of his contemporaries, Rambaud argued for a systematic process by which annual dispatches become steadily reworked into an edited narrative, which "appeared" on the eve of the civil war. This late date of publication was not controversial, but Rambaud's suggestion that the annual dispatches had smoothly and steadily streamed out of Gaul as part of a deliberate public relations effort was. Where Holmes championed the *BG*'s essential truthfulness, Rambaud adopted the opposite extreme. The text became essentially suspicious because of Caesar's (assumed) control over the flow of information. While he emphasized the public nature of the text,

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<sup>15</sup> Michel Rambaud, *L'Art De La Deformation Historique Dans Les Commentaires De Cesar* (Paris: les Belles lettres, 1956); E. T. Salmon, Review of *L'Art De La Deformation Historique Dans Les Commentaires De Cesar*, by Michel Rambaud, *American Journal of Philology* (1955), 201-203; J. F. Gilliam, Review of *L'Art De La Deformation Historique Dans Les Commentaires De Cesar*, by Michel Rambaud, *American Historical Review* (April, 1956), 614-615.



Rimbaud identified it as neither journal nor status report, but strictly as a public relations piece.

Another school, largely German, approached the *BG* as a source to understand its author, seeing the *BG* as a means of investigating Caesar's thoughts and intentions since, fact or propaganda, the text certainly advanced Caesar's own point of view. Matthias Gelzer advocated an image of Caesar as a purely political animal, whose constant interest was in solidifying his own advancement in Roman public life, whether through popular politics, military success, or prestige as successful *literati*.<sup>16</sup> For Gelzer, the Gallic Wars were not part of a cohesive plan, but rather the outcome of Caesar's skill at manipulating events to serve his interests. This perspective moves the *BG* from being either a neutral by-the-numbers account or an inherently skewed source of information to one which has strong elements of both but which is not exclusively either. Another scholar, Christian Meier, one of the most influential modern biographers of Caesar, utilized the same approach.<sup>17</sup> Because the text indicates the habits and ideas of its author within the context of Roman politics, he treated the *BG* as a journal. This treatment placed the *BG* entirely in the biographical realm, despite acknowledgement of its public aspect. The approach taken by this school evades questions of composition and acknowledges the text's public nature, but has the unique disadvantage of tying the *BG* too closely to the personality of Caesar, leaving the narrated events in the shadows.

To varying degrees, scholars have treated the *BG* as an either-or matter. Either Caesar reported with basic accuracy or he did not. Recently, however, the text, its

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<sup>16</sup> Matthias Gelzer, *Caesar: Politician and Statesman*, transl. Peter Needham (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968).

<sup>17</sup> Christian Meier, *Caesar*, transl. David McLintock (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

reliability, and its publication have all come under reexamination. The best example of this was a 1996 seminar, "Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter," that produced a collection of papers focused on basic questions about the text and its portrayal of events.<sup>18</sup> The seminar's purpose also included an explicit departure from the polar position exemplified by Holmes and Rambaud, while pursuing the text's presentation and composition as the key foci. The collected papers generally approached the document from a literary standpoint, finding meaning in narrative structure, Caesar's choice of emphasis, and similar characteristics relevant to a rhetorical document.<sup>19</sup> The seminarians also, although not without exception, renewed the challenge Rambaud had earlier raised regarding the single composition thesis, although eschewing his propagandistic interpretation of the *BG*. The seminar's underlying assumption, that how Caesar narrated had as much meaning and purpose as what he narrated, is shared by this study.

#### The Text – A Case For Periodic Composition

The importance of periodic composition to this paper has already been mentioned. The idea that each book of the *BG* was composed individually and later compiled into an edited, published whole deserves additional discussion because the argument of this study relies upon the development of the text itself. The development of ethnic distinctions based on the political consequences of an earlier Rhine policy cannot be maintained, as this study will attempt to do, if the *BG* consisted only of bare outlines or notes until the coming of the civil war. In fact, there are several indications that the earlier forms of the

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<sup>18</sup> Kathryn Welch and Anton Powell, eds., *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1998).

<sup>19</sup> The present historiographic trend in both England and the United States is to employ literary analysis in determining the meaning, purpose, and construction of Caesar's texts. Andrew M. Riggsby, Review of *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments*, ed. Kathryn Welch and Anton Powell, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (April, 1999).



text's several books were closer to the finished product and that it was, in effect, periodically composed.

One major category of evidence for periodic composition is Caesar's developing literary style. Scholars have long noticed changes in syntax and content as the commentaries progress. One philologist who counted specific grammatical constructions observed a trend from a legalistic style suitable to a field report in Book One to a much more literary style, suggestive of attempts to reach a broader audience, later on, especially by Book Four.<sup>20</sup> For example, Book Five ends at a dramatic point in the story, with the death of an enemy leader. The tendency of the other books, both before and after, is to end at the finish of the campaign season. This is interesting because Books Five and Six narrate a continuous campaign during the middle of a winter (54/53 B.C.), which saw a major revolt along the Rhine. It is possible that this break exists because of editing concerns in the final edition, such as book length or dramatic impact. One scholar suggests, however, that such a change can also mean that Caesar deliberately manipulated his narrative in the field, still recording the facts but weighting them to his benefit by inserting a pause into a difficult campaign to suggest his ongoing success.<sup>21</sup> One grave danger to Rome's assets becomes two lesser ones, at least within the perceptions of his audience, and two prominent successes. This makes Caesar's position seem less precarious and the text seem more adventurous, which may indicate a larger prospective audience. The suggestion is also intriguing because the deliberate use of the drama of the

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<sup>20</sup> J. J. Schlicher, "The Development of Caesar's Narrative Style," *Classical Philology* (July, 1936), 212-224. Schlicher suggests that the change was partly motivated by the glamour and adventure inherent in Caesar's expedition to Britain.

<sup>21</sup> T. P. Wiseman, "The Publication of the *De Bello Gallico*," in *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments*, ed. Welch and Anton Powell (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1998).

leader's death emphasizes an increasing bent for complexity characteristic of a developing style.

The other traditional support for periodic publication stems from inconsistencies of content, such as apparent confusion between two groups at one point followed by greater detail (and differentiation) in later books. This evidence, although rejected by those like Holmes who found it unconvincing, was nonetheless used to support broader interpretations of the text, including its purpose.<sup>22</sup> Caesar's commentaries do not betray the type of third person omniscience common to after-the-fact narratives when the author already knows the full consequences of an actor's actions. This is most true regarding the new people who had upset the status quo by crossing the Rhine. The changing face of the Germani is a clear example of developing content, one that can most readily be accounted for by the theory of periodic composition.

The modern concept of ethnicity does not, strictly speaking, have an equivalent in the *BG*, although the standards of differentiation Caesar employed may be compatible. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, the Romans tended to conflate peoples and their territory, especially if either were unfamiliar to them. Furthermore, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, markers of identity were in fact political (membership in a *civitas*) or "racial" (*gens* – in terms of physical stock like a breeding group or lineage). If the *BG* was composed at one particular time, then one would not only expect Caesar's use of the Rhine to be consistent, but that the Germani (the people) and Germania (their land) would appear at the same point in the text – just as Gaul and its inhabitants do. This is

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<sup>22</sup> Norman J. DeWitt, "The Non-Political Nature of Caesar's Commentaries," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* (1942), 341-352. DeWitt's view is in many ways outdated, as his argument that "there is no need whatever to regard them as political literature" is simplistic. His information on the *BG*'s genre and inconsistencies is stronger.



not the case. The Germani appear in Book One of the *BG* as the followers of Ariovistus. Their relationship to Rome and the Galli is an extension of their leader's and their identity is dependent upon this relationship. Caesar describes their whereabouts in relation to Gaul, with verbs denoting movement or location, such as *transire* ("to cross over") and *incolere* ("to live (in), occupy"), or a construction combining *locus* and *esse* ("to be in a place").<sup>23</sup> Treatment of the territory of these new people does not begin until the description of the Usipetes and Tencteri in Book Four, but the focus remains predominantly on the people not their land.<sup>24</sup> The first clear articulation of a Germania in a strictly geographic sense in the *BG* occurs during a brief geographic description of the mysterious isle of Britain.<sup>25</sup> Once the narrative arrives at the revolt of 53 B.C., Caesar speaks of the territory much more freely. For example, the ethnographic section of Book Six is not just a description of the habits and customs of peoples, but also oddities like animals that exist within the actual land boundaries.<sup>26</sup>

The result of Caesar's first three years was to set the boundaries of a limited, familiar Gaul, one in which Rome had already established its diplomatic position and which Ariovistus had threatened by continuing to transgress the Rhine. As he campaigned along the Lower Rhine the next few years, Caesar found himself dealing with the

<sup>23</sup> Some examples: (2.4) "*plerosque Belgos esse ortos a Germanis Rhenumque antiquitus traductos*" ("most of the Belgians were of German origin and had crossed the Rhine in ancient times"); (4.7) "*in locis esse Germanos audiebat*" ("he was listening to the Germani at that place"); (4.16) "*ad ultimas Germanorum nationes*" ("to the limits of the nations of the Germani").

<sup>24</sup> *Caes. B Gall.*, 4.4: "*multis locis Germaniae triennium vagati ad Rhenum pervenerunt*" ("they happened upon the Rhine after roaming for three years throughout Germania"). Caesar's choice of *pervenio* appears to be an example of his downplaying the arrival of the Usipetes and Tencteri, as it has a haphazard sense. The effect is to weaken the idea of a land of the Germani, and even the concept of Germania is fragmented.

<sup>25</sup> *Caes. B Gall.*, 5.13.

<sup>26</sup> *Caes. B Gall.*, 6.11: "[I]t seems not inappropriate to give an account of the customs of Gaul and German[ia] and the differences between these two nations." The *BG* says *Galliae Germaniaeque*, not *Gallorum et Germanorum*. This has the tidy effect of passing over possible difficulties such as where the Treveri or Belgae fit into the schematic by speaking in terms of regions instead of ethnic groups.

Germani (or their potential presence) more frequently, as well as peoples within Gaul who claimed Germanic descent or did not live entirely in a familiar fashion.<sup>27</sup> It is understandable that Caesar would trace his path through Gaul in the narrative of the *BG* regardless of when he composed the text. That the concept of a distinct land beyond Gaul would follow the identification of newcomers within Gaul as its (former) inhabitants suggests less knowledge about the land and newcomers at one point in the text than another. In other words, the apparent lack of omniscience strongly implies periodic composition.

### This Study – Method and Sources

This thesis will argue that a conflict upon the Roman frontier in 58 B.C. resulted in Julius Caesar adopting the Rhine River as a political and geographic boundary for Gaul. It will further indicate how Caesar employed the Rhine and other criteria to draw a sharp ethnographic distinction between the Galli and the Germani in the effort to create and maintain a new frontier. This argument assumes that each book of the *BG* was written soon after the events it describes and prior to the following one. Some basic accuracy in narration is likewise assumed, but the *BG* will largely be held to its own standard as a public text with its own argument. For the purposes of this paper, the validity of Caesar's claims do not rely on whether the Galli were actually physically, linguistically, ethnically, racially, or nationally distinct from the Germani. They rely on

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<sup>27</sup> It has been suggested that Caesar's formulation of the Germanic identity (beyond existing stereotypes) was adopted by people as much as impressed upon them. If so, then Caesar's rhetoric not only offered his Roman audience a framework for northern geography, but also created a foundation for a future Gallo-Roman identity that seized upon the Rhine as a rallying point. Nico Roymans, "Romanization, Cultural Identity and the Ethnic Discussion, The Integration of the Lower Rhine Populations in the Roman Empire," in *Integration in the Early Roman West: The Role of Culture and Ideology*, ed. Jeannet Metzler, Martin Millet, Nico Roymans, Jan Slofstra (Luxembourg: Musee National d'Histoire et d'Art, 1993), 47-64.



the identifiers and reasons he presents because these factors, the basis of his perception, would through the *BG* have the most authority and influence in the Roman world.

The *BG* is, of course, this study's main source. Most auxiliary source material comes from Cicero, whose letters and speeches not only have the virtue of being contemporary but of a similar rhetorical type as the *BG*. Furthermore, Cicero was not only of the same class, status, literary accomplishment, and influence as Caesar himself, but Cicero's brother Quintus served as one of Caesar's *legati*. Given that Cicero and Quintus exchanged letters during the conflict, he thus offers a useful standard to determine the communication, effect, and typicality of Caesar's information. Additional primary sources are limited. The literary nature of the questions posed reduces the utility of many traditional used sources for studying the Late Republic. Most literary sources detailing the conflict ultimately derive from the *BG* limiting their usefulness for this paper.

Reservations aside, a number of outside texts have their benefits. Given that part of the argument is geographic, Strabo, the nearest and most complete geographer to the Gallic Wars, provides some useful source material. There is some question whether Strabo used the *BG* (he does not mention Caesar as a source), but he did have information about Germania due to imperial campaigns seventy years after the Gallic Wars.<sup>28</sup> In addition, Strabo's archival materials included Posidonius, now a lost source, who visited

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<sup>28</sup> Strabo *Geogr.*, 7.1.9. The border did move beyond the Rhine and at least one Germanic group, the Ubii, were allowed into Gaul during imperial times. This resulted in the creation of two provinces of Germania on the eastern side of the Rhine, an act significant for imperial administration, but less so for the continuity of the border itself. Strabo *Geogr.*, 4.1.2-4.3.4; Woolf, *Becoming Roman, The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul*, 38-40

continental Europe decades before Caesar (although he did not travel as far).<sup>29</sup> Strabo's geography thus offers the best context for the acceptance and strength of Caesar's own claims. Other sources used include Polybius, Sallust, and Appian, mostly for background and contextual material. This admittedly limited selection provides a fairly wide spectrum of time and perspective, as each dealt with similar themes yet wrote successively in relation to Caesar, with Polybius earlier, Sallust within the same period, and Appian later. Finally, material sources, inscriptions especially, are comparatively few for the period, and, although some notes on archaeology are used for comparative purposes, these are not stressed.

This study has two chapters, each with two major sections. Chapter Two, "Ancient Gerrymandering," concentrates on the initial development of Caesar's Rhine policy in 58 B.C. with a specific focus on Book One. This chapter's first section will provide the background and context of the Gallic Wars and the institutional role Caesar held. The second component will follow the second half of Book One, as Caesar justifies his conflict with Ariovistus. Chapter Two's central argument will be that the Rhine policy began the process of border creation by demarcating Rome's hegemonic area and discouraging outside interference with the Galli within. Chapter Three, "Separating the Right from the Left," will address the ethnographic aspects of Caesar's decision, including the consequences during the second period of the Gallic Wars which centered along the river, in 55 to 53 B.C., with an especial focus on Books Four and Six. Its first component will discuss the terminology and social structures that underlay Roman ideas

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<sup>29</sup> He was not necessarily the first Greco-Roman explorer of northern Europe. There is a possibility that Pytheas of Massilia may have traveled around the British Isles in the fourth century B.C. This is disputable, however. O. A. W. Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps* (London: Thomas & Hudson, Ltd., 1985), 29-30.

of civilization and how these applied to Gaul. The second section will consist of Caesar's contrast between the Galli and Germani on the basis of these Roman ideas. Chapter Three's principal argument will be that, having set the Rhine as a political demarcation, the river subsequently served as a means of categorizing peoples when new circumstances required. Chapter Four will conclude this thesis. Overall, this study emphasizes the influence of the *BG* and its author's political motives in establishing the ideological foundations of one of the principal borders of western history.



## CHAPTER TWO

### ANCIENT GERRYMANDERING

Few Latin students are unfamiliar with Caesar's opening lines describing Gaul: "The whole of Gaul is divided into three parts, one occupied by the Belgae, another occupied by the Aquitani, and the third by those who we call the Galli, but are in their own language Celtae. All of these groups differ among themselves in language, customs, and laws [*lingua, institutes, legibus*]"<sup>30</sup> The passage goes on to describe the territorial divisions between the three groups, with that of the Galli enclosed by the Rhone, Garonne, Atlantic Ocean, the Belgae, and the Rhine.<sup>31</sup>

These lines highlight the political decisions of Rome's proconsul in Gaul. First, the land of the Gauls (*Gallia*) is divided into three parts, each division hosting a distinct people. The Galli are explicitly identified with the Celtae, those in the central portion abutting Rome's northernmost province (also a "Gallia"). The unit is a territory, but its pieces are given in terms of their inhabitants. The word *omnis*, here meaning "in entirety" rather than "all of," is an appositive indicating the broadest possible use of *Gallia*. The Belgae are not Celtae, and their presence indicates an end to the Celtae's range, yet they inhabit a part of Gaul and so have some claim to being Galli (see Chapter

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<sup>30</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.1.

<sup>31</sup> The common Latin word for "border," "territory," or "country," especially in Book One, is *finis*. The idea is that the borders enclose a specific space, a territory. Charlton Lewis, ed., *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879). Caesar does not define *Gallia* as a whole with *finis*, he separates distinct peoples into distinct parts marked by static features.



Three). In other words, by explicitly identifying the Celtae with the Galli, Caesar simply clarifies the relationship between his theater of operations (Gaul, the whole broad region where Galli of any type roam) and those with whom he is involved (the Celtae, those of the central portion whom he will call Galli). The second sentence indicates what the distinctions among these groups are (language, traditions, customs). The text goes on to describe the Belgae, the strongest and least commercial of any of those peoples mentioned. Caesar most explicitly credits their strength to their habit of fighting the Germani, whom he has already identified as *trans Rhenum* ("across the Rhine") and at the limits of Gallic territory.<sup>32</sup> The very first chapter of the first book of the *BG* has already suggested distinctions and offered some rationale for them. As will be argued, Book One is very much a deliberate piece of political rhetoric.

This chapter examines Caesar's campaigns in 58 B.C., first against the Helvetii, Gallic migrants, and then against Ariovistus, the leader of Germanic migrants. A specific focus on Book One is necessary because it describes the first phase of Caesar's use of the Rhine River. It will be argued that the river became a border between the Galli and the Germani largely in consequence to the behavior of Ariovistus. The behavior the Germanic chieftain (*rex*) in the *BG* functions in two ways. First, it serves as an apology for Caesar due to Ariovistus' status in relation to Rome. Second, it provides the drama of Book One with a colorful villain who embodies undesirable behavior and thus allows Caesar to highlight the better behavior of the Galli. Caesar's rhetorical case against Ariovistus also parallels the establishment of the Rhine in terms of the frontier zone. The applicability of this model also necessitates some discussion of the beginning of the war.

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<sup>32</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.1.

Book One's portrayal of the Galli and Germani, upon which Caesar based his use of the Rhine, derives from Caesar's attempt to maintain Rome's existing relationships.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first addresses the context of the Gallic Wars, including the events leading up to the conflict and a brief outline of the proconsul's sociopolitical role within the frontier. This context emphasizes the political terms of Caesar's initial use of the Rhine by showing the expansion of Roman dominion to the river and demonstrating the structures of that dominion. The second part focuses more closely on the Rhine and discusses Caesar's use of the river in relation to the rhetorical argument against Ariovistus. In 58 B.C., Caesar was in a position to respond to a perceived threat to the frontier and to define and restrict that threat by adopting the Rhine as a border. He would be the first Roman to go past the river, but at first sought only to prevent others from coming across.<sup>33</sup>

The purpose of Caesar's Rhine policy was to prevent mass migrations of peoples into the lands of those already secured. As proconsul, Caesar had the responsibility of defending the frontier zone, thus maintaining Rome's social and diplomatic network beyond her own territory. If new populations like the Helvetii and Ariovistus' Germani displaced or weakened existing peoples, then the provinces would be exposed to attack, financial investments in the provinces would be endangered, and, most importantly, the prestige of Rome and the Senate would decline. The Romans tended to treat unfamiliar groups as if they were autochthonous, as if they had always lived at their contemporary location. In other words, *what* and *who* a people were depended upon *where* they were,

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<sup>33</sup> App. *Gall.*, 1.5. Appian's testimony to Caesar being a pioneer does not itself support a meaningful distinction between the Galli and Germani. It does indicate that, whoever first described northern Europe, Caesar was remembered as having the most authority.



and vice versa.<sup>34</sup> This made distant lands comprehensible and (as will be discussed in Chapter Three) fit into Rome's own social and diplomatic organization by linking the people to the character of their leaders. The security of the frontier zone rested on the *fides* ("trust," or perhaps "credibility") of all those involved, as the willingness to respect the decisions of the Senate and adhere to treaties removed the need for expensive campaigns. Politics was such that not all transgressors were equal. A key difference between the Helvetii and the Germani was the recent accommodation between Rome and Ariovistus, who Caesar portrays as unduly arrogant. The Helvetii, once defeated, respond with appropriate submission. Caesar's Rhine policy established an ethnic divide in 58 B.C. only in that it separated two groups from each other. The significant characteristics of those groups were political, essentially relating to how either fit into Rome's sphere of influence. Gallia and the Galli were incorporated, those outside it were not. The Rhine would mark the frontier's expanded area and block a people proven to be untrustworthy.

### The Gallic Wars – From the Beginning

The relationship between Roman and Gallus was ancient even in Caesar's time.<sup>35</sup>

Rome fought enemies in every direction throughout her history, but only the north

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<sup>34</sup> Cic. *Scaur.*, 17.39; Elizabeth Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985), 250-266; Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 134-137. Much of Rome's classification of peoples depended upon the area they inhabited, with environmental factors or moral habits explaining their abilities and behavior. For Gaul, see Charles Ebel, *Transalpine Gaul: The Emergence of a Roman Province* (Lieden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 49-51.

<sup>35</sup> Polybius offers the first "comprehensive" descriptions of the Celts, probably by the 150's B.C., through their fighting with Hannibal or in Rome's Cisalpine, Eastern, or Hispanic wars. Some time in the 80's, Poseidonius traveled through parts of *Gallia Comata*, but his account survives only in other sources (especially Strabo). For all the contact with Gauls within the provinces, little survives that was written about them in the intervening years. Nonetheless there is an interesting contrast in that Strabo, who had more information than even Caesar, can describe the Gauls at great length, but runs out of material on the Germani much more quickly.

provided an enemy that almost conquered her. Previously known as a plague to the Etruscans, the Galli had violently established contact with Rome through the sack of the city in the fourth century B.C. This event was so prominent in Roman memory, rhetoric, and art that it suggests a new year zero in Rome's sense of her own history.<sup>36</sup> Later, Galli served as mercenaries, joining Hannibal in his invasion of Italy during the Second Punic War, or fighting against Rome in Spain, Anatolia, and the Balkans.<sup>37</sup> Rome, in turn, campaigned heavily in the north, defeating Gallic groups and seizing their territory, especially in northern Italy (Cisalpine Gaul). The Germani, however, were relatively new, first encountered by Rome roughly sixty years before the Gallic Wars.<sup>38</sup> This history of animosity has often placed Caesar's concern for the Rhine in a sympathetic light.

Despite continual conflict with them, Rome never had an explicit program to conquer the whole of Gaul. Northward expansion was sporadic and the dominion of Rome expressed itself through the frontier system. In 121 B.C., by aiding its Greek ally Massilia, Rome carved out her northernmost province, Transalpine Gaul, west of the Rhone on the southern coast of the continent. This conflict established the frontier zone for which Caesar was responsible in 58. It consisted of the province between Hispania and the Rhone, the allied city of Massilia securing the eastern flank, a broken enemy, the Arverni, to the northwest, and Gallic allies, the Aedui, protecting the north. This system precluded intensive campaigns further north by preventing any Gallic group within

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<sup>36</sup> J. H. C. Williams, *Beyond the Rubicon: Romans and Gauls in Republican Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 140-142.

<sup>37</sup> H. D. Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World* (London: Areopagitica Press, 1987), 100.

<sup>38</sup> The name *Germani*, which is almost identical to a Latin word for "brotherly," seems to have been of Gallic origin. Henry H. Howorth, "The Germans of Caesar," *The English Historical Review* (Oxford: University Press, 1908), 417-433.



striking distance from gathering the support necessary to attack the province. There had been a handful of campaigns conducted by earlier governors of Transalpine Gaul, but Caesar was the first proconsul to face an actual threat to the frontier, with one exception.

The exception consisted of the Cimbri and Teutoni, who engaged in a mass migration into Gaul in the late second century B.C. They are almost universally identified as Germani, possibly because of their origin beyond the Rhine, although no text describing them predates the *BG*.<sup>39</sup> They spent nearly a decade harassing the Galli, defeating Roman armies, and transgressing allied territory, until finally defeated at the threshold of Italy by Caesar's uncle-in-law Marius in 101 B.C. Scholars both ancient and modern have made much of the near recreation of the fourth century invasion.<sup>40</sup> As will be discussed below, the *BG* often recalls the Cimbri, especially in Book One, as part of Caesar's justification of attacking Ariovistus.

Despite the near miss of the Cimbri, the northern frontier remained stable through the turmoil of the Social War and the conflict between Marius and Sulla (c. 91-83 B.C.). These civil wars, fought respectively over the political rights of Rome's Italian allies and the prestige of commanders who championed different approaches to land reform, continued to wrack the Republic until the early 70's B.C. Regarding Gaul, Cicero could describe the region c. 69 as the "province of Gaul, which comprises a type of men and communities which . . . have been quite recently subdued by our generals" under the

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<sup>39</sup> For details on the Cimbri, their homeland and ethnicity, see T. Rice Holmes, *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul*, second edition (New York: AMS Press, 1971), 549-553. While modern scholarship, principally archaeological, has dealt with the question of whether the Cimbri were Gallic or Germanic, the traditional arguments remain central. Tacitus is firm that the Cimbri, who still lived in Jutland during the Flavian period, were Germanic. The fact that they entered from "outside" Gaul seems to be the main support of their Germanic origin so exact identification is inextricable with Caesar's paradigm.

<sup>40</sup> As one puts it: "The Ga[lli] were bad enough; but now the conquerors of the Ga[lli] were coming." Philip Van Ness Myers, *A History of Rome*, second revised edition (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1917), 78.

“power and dominion of the Roman people” and which hosted “a citizen-colony, which stands as a watch-tower and bulwark of the Roman people, and a barrier of defense . . . there is also the city of Massilia . . . inhabited by brave and faithful allies, who have found in the resources and rewards of the Roman people a recompense for the dangers they have run in our Gallic Wars.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, despite the near trauma suffered five decades earlier, the frontier zone in Gaul was considered secure, without any contact with the Rhine.

The concept of the frontier zone implies a level of continual interaction between Rome and the inhabitants. Two important ideas characterized Roman attitudes to this relationship. The first is that of the *terror gallicus*, a perceived fear of the Galli due to their history of conflict with Rome.<sup>42</sup> While the *terror gallicus* may not have characterized the Republic continuously from the sack of Rome or the appearance of the Cimbri, the Romans did have a heightened concern for the northern frontier shortly before Caesar’s command. In his rhetoric of 69, Cicero defended the “honor of the Roman people” and proclaimed them beyond any mere fear of war.<sup>43</sup> Six years later, his speeches lacked this sense of superiority. In 63 B.C., the year of Cicero’s consulship,

<sup>41</sup> Cic. *Font.*, 5.12-5.13, transl. N. H. Watts, London, 1931. The military language – watch-tower (*specula*) and bulwark (*propugnaculum*) – in relation to the veterans’ colony indicates more than rhetorical flourish. It is also a subtle hint that Roman valor had won little more than a fortified camp. The speech was given in defense of a Roman governor whose financial practices had upset the neighboring Galli. Cicero expresses a confidence in Rome’s position and willingness to maintain it, openly challenging the Galli to take up arms. For details on Massilia, see Ebel, *Transalpine Gaul*, 61, 90-100.

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Rawson, “Religion and Politics in the Late Second Century B.C. at Rome,” in *Roman Culture and Society: Collected Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 155; Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman, The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 61. The phrase is a modern one, apparently originating in the second century A.D. in an excerpt involving Mithradates and his Gallic allies. Just. *Epit.*, 38.4. It has recently been argued that the Gauls were not especially feared because they did not threaten Rome’s military or cultural supremacy, as demonstrated by their frequent defeats. Cicero nonetheless employs them rhetorically several times, and it may be that the so-called *terror gallicus* (a modern phrase) was stronger outside the aristocratic elite. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 411-426.

<sup>43</sup> Cic. *Font.*, 31.49.



Rome avoided yet another civil war with the failure of the Catilinarian Conspiracy. The Allobroges, a Gallic group, had representatives in Rome to approach the Senate regarding their debts to Roman creditors. The Catilinarians approached these delegates, but the Allobroges exposed the conspiracy. Referring to this connection, Cicero darkly hinted at the danger of the Galli in speeches to both the Senate and the citizen assembly, even raising the possibility of a general uprising and a possible invasion.<sup>44</sup> Caesar was a junior member of the Senate during the conspiracy, so his portrayal of the Galli (see below) was likely a response to a growing sense of ambiguity regarding them. Such ambiguity would make sense if Roman society, or a significant portion of it like the Senate, perceived itself vulnerable to foreign disruptions similar to domestic ones like the Catilinarians. The Galli inhabited territory close to Rome and her provinces, and they had already invaded, twice. Rhetorical bombast or not, the possibility of a third instance may have contributed to an increased awareness of the Galli just prior to Caesar's proconsulship.

Such increased awareness would also involve the second important idea of the *pax deorum* ("peace of the gods"). This was the belief that divine favor expressed itself in Rome's strength and prosperity because of proper cult conduct and concern for moral order. The dividends of Rome's empire did not just include military victory, financial gain, and unrivalled prestige, but increased poverty, slave revolts, civil wars, and the like. The emotional environment created by these results led to a belief in a moral decline or loss of tradition that was responsible for these disruptions.<sup>45</sup> Like the *terror gallicus*, the *pax deorum* may have originated as early as the Gallic sack of Rome in the fourth

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<sup>44</sup> Cic. *Cat.*, 4.4. Cf. Cic. *Font.*, 16.36, 21.49. In 69 B.C., Cicero proudly dares the Galli to offer a challenge, while chastising his fellow senators for bowing to threats. In 63, he vehemently insists that a war might come and it should be avoided.

<sup>45</sup> Sall. *Cat.*, 10-13.

century, but the *pax deorum* continually remained in Roman thought and rhetoric.<sup>46</sup> This idea is less important for the political context of the Gallic Wars (the connection between religion and civilization will be discussed in Chapter Three), but requires mention because it contextualizes the Roman views of autochthony and land ownership that will recur throughout this study. The integrity of territory went hand in hand with its inhabitants' right to it.

### In the Late Republic – A New Gaul

Material wealth had a downside, as it could, at least according to Roman prejudice, lead to a sharp decline in military virtue and virility. The inhabitants of Gaul were neither passive nor static between 121 and 63 B.C. They instead developed intimate financial and commercial ties to the Roman world.<sup>47</sup> The groups within the frontier zone also faced a social and political transformation that may only have been partially complete by the time of the Gallic Wars. There are strong hints that property owners were displacing warrior elites throughout much of Gallia and the frontier. The Cimbri may have been so disruptive driving population off key pieces of land that prices dropped, allowing more fortunate landowners to acquire and consolidate larger plots.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The idea in Cicero's speech centers around the testimony of a Vestal Virgin, brought in defense of the ex-governor. For the peace of the gods and fear of the Gauls, see Rawson, "Religion and Politics," in *Roman Culture and Society: Collected Papers*, 149-168; William V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327-70 BC* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 118-122; Williams, *Beyond the Rubicon*, 152-166.

<sup>47</sup> Strabo *Geogr.*, 4.4.1; J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina University Press, 1979), 66; Barry Cunliffe, *The Oxford Illustrated Prehistory of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 350-353. Strabo states that Gaul produces a considerable number of swine, and is a major supplier of Italy. The inhabitants were also notable for their hunting dogs. The import of choice was Roman wine.

<sup>48</sup> Stephen L. Dyson, *The Creation of the Roman Frontier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 164-170. Cf. Strabo *Geogr.*, 7.2.1. A story ran that the Helvetii, who had previously been a settled, peaceful people, became inspired to warfare after encountering the Cimbri, who had grown conspicuously richer due to war-spoils. It may be that the warrior aristocracy, which would have depended upon prestige goods, was undercut by a land-owner's ability to engage in commerce.



Increased commerce with the Mediterranean, either over the Alps or via Massilia, further fueled this consolidation, weakening the system of chiefdoms and the warrior aristocracy that had previously controlled much of Gaul through an economy of prestige goods.<sup>49</sup>

The flourishing of profitable contact between the Republic and Celtica would have added incentive for Rome to ensure Gallia's stability. The suggestion of such disruption is attractive because it explains an upsurge in inter-Gallic conflict, but also indicates the motive for one group to invite the Germani into the region, as the Sequani may have needed Ariovistus' assistance against their more prosperous enemies, the Aedui..

The frontier system established in 121 B.C. gave Rome key allies (*socios*) in the Aedui, who were already opponents to the weakened Arverni. The Aedui were by Caesar's time frequently feuding with their eastern neighbors, particularly the Sequani, whose own territory abutted the Rhine. The aforementioned Allobroges, another eastern neighbor, were also enemies to the Aedui, and Rome intervened on their side both in 122 B.C. and again during a second revolt in 62.<sup>50</sup> The Senate decreed that responsibility for the safety of the frontier and the Aedui rested with the proconsul of Transalpine Gaul during the conflict, and Caesar cites this obligation during his exchanges with Ariovistus.<sup>51</sup> Unlike the other major actors in the Gallic Wars, Ariovistus did not have

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<sup>49</sup> For an introduction to pre-conquest Gaul, see Anthony King, *Roman Gaul and Germany* (Berkeley: University of California, 1990), 11-33; Greg Woolf, "Regional Productions in Early Roman Gaul," in *Economies Beyond Agriculture in the Classical World*, Leicester-Nottingham Studies in Ancient History volume nine, ed. David J. Mattingly and John Salmon (London: Routledge 2001), 52. For the Roman idea of tribe, see Claude Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994), 189-190. For a description of Entremont, a city of the Salluvii quite close to the Roman ideal, see Ebel, *Transalpine Gaul*, 65-66. Caesar typically describes the Galli in the *BG* by calling them *civitates*, with its implications of a legally organized community. This was by no means typical (Cicero, for example, uses *gentes*), but underscores the fact that Caesar was operating within a network of existing political entities with their own interests and not a random horde.

<sup>50</sup> Ebel, *Transalpine Gaul*, 70. The Allobroges were in Rome in 63 B.C. partly because of this campaign, as their debt to Roman lenders originated in the indemnity caused by their defeat.

<sup>51</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.35.

any connection to previous wars in Gaul, he was a newcomer. The Sequani contacted him sometime in the late 60's to assist them in overcoming the Aedui. Ariovistus had marriage ties to the Suebi, a large confederation east of the Rhine, and to the kingdom of Noricum, an ally of Rome, making him a prominent leader and possibly a creditable patron even in Roman eyes. Because of pressure created by Germanic movements, or similar Gallic offers, the Helvetii began preparations for a mass migration with some of their allies in 62, while the Catilinarian Conspiracy and concern over Gaul was still present in Roman minds. These events emphasize the critical point that the frontier zone, thought secure in 69, was no longer so seven years later, let alone eleven.

The changes in both Rome and Gaul reached a head before Caesar was even in position to intervene. Ariovistus made good on his promises to the Sequani, inflicting a near-crippling defeat on the Aedui not long before March of 60, as one of Cicero's letters tells:

[T]he great thing just now is the Gallic war-scare. Our Aeduan brothers have recently taken a beating, and there is no doubt that the Helvetii are up in arms and raiding the Province. The Senate has decreed that . . . ambassadors with full powers be sent to visit the Gallic communities and try to stop them making common cause with the Helvetii.<sup>52</sup>

The Helvetii were nowhere near Roman territory, and Cicero may have confused them with Ariovistus. Regardless, Rome's first response was diplomatic, and it worked.<sup>53</sup> The instigator of the Helvetian migration, Orgetorix, perished in a power struggle, and the Helvetii disappeared from Rome's immediate view. Orgetorix had attempted to use his people's migration to forge a power bloc and to that end had

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<sup>52</sup> Cic. *Att.*, 1.19, transl. E. O. Bailey, New York, 1920. Notably, this affair actually drew attention away from land issues.

<sup>53</sup> App. *Gall.*, 16; Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.35. Appian claims that Caesar "himself vot[ed] for" the *amicitia* with Ariovistus. Caesar, perhaps predictably, does not say whether he did or not.



established marriage ties to Dumnorix of the Aedui, and Casticus of the Sequani.<sup>54</sup> He planned to lead the Helvetii and their allies through Sequani territory and join forces with the Aedui, the strongest Gallic community. Cicero seems aware of some coming resolution to the affair by June of 60 B.C.<sup>55</sup> One key interpretation of these events is that the senatorial decree to the proconsul was aimed against Ariovistus but Rome then allied with him against the Helvetii.<sup>56</sup> Certainly the Aeduan defeat, Casticus' subsequent downfall (Caesar never again mentions him), and Cicero's assumption that the Helvetii were responsible support the idea. As for Ariovistus, the Senate accepted him into an *amicitia* (a less defined relationship than *socios*) by 59, during Caesar's consulship, bringing him into the existing diplomatic network.<sup>57</sup> Insofar as the Romans could see, the death of Orgetorix had prevented the Helvetii from disrupting the frontier and Ariovistus had accepted an accord. By May, Gaul was so peaceful that Cicero could mock a colleague for missing a chance at a triumph.<sup>58</sup> The frontier remained intact, and the Rhine was still not involved.

While the frontier system remained intact in 61 B.C., Rome's northern security was in a state of flux. The individuals of note during the period of the Gallic Wars and later were in many cases reaching their pre-eminence. Caesar was campaigning as proprietor in Hispania, while his future partner and rival Pompey was returning from his successful eastern campaigns. It is not clear precisely when Ariovistus arrived in Gaul,

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<sup>54</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.2-1.4. This background was important for Caesar because it elevated the threat of the entire frontier erupting into conflict, but also to foreshadow the involvement of Dumnorix and the trouble he would later cause.

<sup>55</sup> Cic. *Att.*, 2.1.

<sup>56</sup> Holmes, *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul*, 38-49.

<sup>57</sup> For these issues, see A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, second edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); Erich S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*, volume one (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>58</sup> Cic. *Att.*, 1.20.

or how much of an effect he had until the defeat of the Aedui.<sup>59</sup> Some Galli had grown rich and powerful through contacts with Rome, while others pursued more traditional routes to leading status. For example, Dumnorix, whose personal retinue of cavalry seems to have survived the Aeduan defeat, competed with his brother, the pro-Roman druid Diviciacus, for influence within the Aedui. Diviciacus had apparently approached the Senate for assistance after the Aeduan defeat.<sup>60</sup> Dumnorix likely had the advantage through his control over tolls and tax contracts because these sources of revenue provided the cash to maintain armed retainers and to make loans.<sup>61</sup> Orgetorix' death cost him one connection to the Helvetii, but Ariovistus' occupation of the Sequani compensated by making Dumnorix their lone ally in central Gaul. Unfortunately, with Ariovistus preventing travel through Sequani territory, the only way for the Helvetii to enter central Gaul was by transgressing the boundaries of Transalpine Gaul in 58.<sup>62</sup> Also in that year, Rome's proconsul of Transalpine Gaul learned of their approach, marched to meet them, fortified the Saone, refused the Helvetii access, repelled their answering assault, and marched after them. So began the Gallic Wars.

### The Roman Frontier – War as Politics

The lead-in to the Gallic Wars makes three things clear. First, the theoretical model of a frontier zone describes the strategic situation superbly.<sup>63</sup> As Cicero's letters

<sup>59</sup> Hoimes, *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul*, 553-554. The consensus view at Holmes' writing was apparently that the Germani entered Gaul around 71 B.C., although some argue as late as 61. The dating is a question of how literally to take certain lines in the *BG*. Ariovistus' arrival is less important for this study than how the Romans and Galli dealt with it.

<sup>60</sup> *Caes. B Gall.*, 1.39; *Caes. B Gall.*, 6.12; *Cic. Div.*, 1.41.90.

<sup>61</sup> *Caes. B Gall.*, 1.18. Diviciacus was supported by Rome. Caesar is not shy of accusing Dumnorix of working against him, especially just before the second voyage to Britain in 54. Dumnorix was killed attempting to escape the expedition.

<sup>62</sup> *Caes. B Gall.*, 1.10-1.11.

<sup>63</sup> Dyson, *The Creation of the Roman Frontier*, 136-173.



demonstrate, the Senate was aware of occurrences within Gaul quite distant from Rome's own provinces, and there was concern for the fallen fortunes of her regional ally, the Aedui. Second, the strategic situation was of an essentially political character. Rome's territorial boundaries were not breached (although Caesar noted the future likelihood of this) nor were her citizens attacked, but the city's dominion was upset. Rome dealt with autonomous dependencies, but ruled through financial, political, and military obligations, ties that two large migrating populations with martial reputations would alter. Either population, Helvetii or Germani, would have transformed the comparative prestige, wealth, and strength of the native communities, changing their relative positions, and undermining Rome's influence within the frontier zone.<sup>64</sup> Thus, Caesar's pursuit of war after taking office was to address this situation and to prevent destabilization.

Before turning specifically to the respective roles of Ariovistus and the Rhine in the *BG*, Caesar's own role deserves discussion. The Gallic Wars occurred at a time when Rome awarded greater levels of power to individual delegates, with Caesar and Pompey being the most important examples. The conflict was concurrent with their political union and may have contributed to Rome's breakdown into another civil war. This said, the rise of Caesar's fortunes within Roman politics due to his success in Gaul does not directly concern this paper.<sup>65</sup> A greater concern is Caesar's typicality, or the extent to

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<sup>64</sup> The precise quality at issue is that of *dignitas*. For an individual, *dignitas* generally indicates "honor" or "reputation," while collectively it has an association with influence. The Roman concern for it stems from a belief that the quality summons respect and discourages attack. For a discussion of *dignitas* in general and related values, see J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), esp. Appendix I, 272-279; Susan P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 15-23; Cic. *Pis.*, 11.9, 24.57.

<sup>65</sup> This is an element that Caesar himself does not emphasize (aside from when his grain supplies are in danger) but modern commentators never fail to notice. For example, Strabo relates that the treasure of Toulouse, a total of 15,000 talents, was largely collected from lakes and that some suspected that this wealth came from the Celtic sack of Delphi in the third century. Strabo, 4.1.13. Cf. Cic. *Att.*, 5.17; Cic.

which his actions fit into the accepted sociopolitical role of a Republican proconsul. This is an important issue precisely because the Gallic Wars did not initially involve either Caesar or the Rhine. The governor of Transalpine Gaul was responsible for the security of the frontier zone, and Caesar's actions in Book One, indeed even the composition of the *BG* itself, were consistent with that responsibility. Using Macedonia as his example, Cicero asks:

Who ever held control of a province and its forces, and sent no single dispatch to the Senate? Above all, when that province was so important and equipped with forces so numerous [and] has such formidable barbarian tribes [*gentes*] upon its borders [*attinguit*, to reach] that our Macedonian commanders have always acted as if the limits [*fines*] of their province were only those of their swords and javelins.<sup>66</sup>

The role of provincial governor included two specific obligations that the Romans expected the officeholder to fill. One was to keep the Senate informed of his activities, and since the claims in these commentaries would suggest future honors, some grandstanding was expected. Secondly, and critically, the governor was a military commander responsible for protecting territorial integrity by campaigning against dangerous groups at the edges of the province. Caesar's own decision was to eject the Germani from Gaul by using the Rhine as a landmark. Clearly, his actions are not totally inconsistent with Roman expectations.

In broad terms, Caesar was a typical proconsul, since Roman governors were predominantly military commanders and not administrators during the Republic. Aside

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*Fam.*, 7.7. Cicero advises his client Trebatius to do his best at making his fortune under Caesar's command. These letters are also significant because they demonstrate that, regardless of why Rome went to a territory, the Romans did expect to get something for the effort: "I hear that Britain has not an ounce of either gold or silver." For the expropriation of wealth in general, see P. A. Brunt, "Laus Imperii," in *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, ed. P. D. A. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker, The Cambridge University Research Seminar in Ancient History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 159-191.

<sup>66</sup> Cic. *Pis.*, 16.38, transl. N. H. Watts, London, 1931. The exact same circumstances existed in Gaul.



from Caesar, only Cicero leaves an intact, personal account of his governorship during the Late Republic. Cicero was proconsul of Cilicia in 50 B.C. and led at least one campaign and siege. A fellow senator congratulated him on his administration of the province, but refused to recommend a triumph.<sup>67</sup> Good rule was clearly not viewed with the same credit as military glory. Provincial governors possessed a level of *imperium* ("absolute authority") equal to the highest magistrates of Rome, with the power to protect Rome's citizens, settle disputes between native communities (including the definition of their territory), and to campaign independently according to necessity.<sup>68</sup> Proconsuls settled disputes and made treaties on their own authority, but their administration was generally limited to appropriating resources, overseeing taxation, and collecting indemnities.

The practical independence of governors occasionally caused Rome great difficulty by causing inconvenient warfare or, worse, defeat, and it is important to view the *BG* with this in mind.<sup>69</sup> The key feature for the Romans themselves was success, not motive, and it is tempting to see some connection with the *pax deorum* in this.<sup>70</sup>

Although the Rhine had greater significance in later books of the *BG* as a line between

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<sup>67</sup> Cic. *Fam.*, 15.5. Cicero, who had little inclination towards military affairs, almost makes it seem that he campaigned only because it was expected of him. His correspondence is also interesting because it suggests a haphazardness in Rome's deployments: "You can take it from me here and now: at this time, with this army, and in this place, just so much could be done." Cic. *Att.*, 5.20, transl. Dr. R. Shackleton Bailey, New York, 1986. Cf. Brunt, "*Laus Imperii*," in *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, 178, footnote 69, regarding Roman dispositions prior to the Gallic Wars.

<sup>68</sup> Provinces had only gradually become associated with territory, and essentially consisted of a task or category for which the governor would be granted consular *imperium*. J. S. Richardson, *Hispaniae: Spain and the Development of Roman Imperialism, 218-82 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 4-5.

<sup>69</sup> Since such poor judgment reflected badly upon senatorial class, these examples had great rhetorical effect. Cicero, for example, pointedly passes over a string of such examples prior to praising Caesar, whose success apparently justified his actions. Cic. *Pis.*, 21.50.

<sup>70</sup> Nathan Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi: Military Defeat and Aristocratic Competition in the Middle and Late Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 54-91. The sociological element of *pax deorum* involved removing blame from individual Roman aristocrats for unsuccessful campaigns.



Germani and Galli, in Book One it was a simple political division between the Germani of Ariovistus and the Sequani, to whom Caesar offered protection (see below). Caesar's proconsular *imperium* allowed him to simply declare the river the border, which would make sense to Roman minds because bodies of water were customarily used for defining large regions.<sup>71</sup> As his opening lines demonstrate, Caesar used rivers other than the Rhine to differentiate one group's land from another, but these were as much political divisions as ethnic. In point of fact Caesar concentrates quite specifically on the Rhine, especially once he begins his argument against Rome's alliance with Ariovistus. The nature of the division, at least in Book One, remains a political one.

#### Two Opponents – Helvetii and Germani

The narrative of the *BG* opens with the Helvetii, explaining Caesar's activities in terms of the threat they pose to the province and the Aedui. Specific mention of Ariovistus does not occur until after the Helvetian defeat, in a meeting with the Gallic leaders. The rhetorical goal of the *BG* becomes immediately apparent. Even as the supposed danger is introduced, it is described in relation to another: "the Helvetii were . . . leading to the rest of the Galli in courage, because they often fought daily battles with the Germani, so that they both keep [the Germani] from their own territory and wage war in [Germanic] territory themselves."<sup>72</sup> As noted in the introduction, the Germani are introduced as a group before the territory of Germania itself. In point of fact, Caesar introduces the Germani as a frontier threat prior discussing them as a people who were

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<sup>71</sup> In 46 B.C., Cicero describes the provinces won by Caesar by their boundaries, the Rhine, Ocean, and Nile, all bodies of water. Cic. *Scaur.*, 9.28. The Po River, for example, helped define Cisalpine Gaul. See Nicholas Purcell, "The Creation of Provincial Landscape: The Roman Impact on Cisalpine Gaul," in *The Early Roman Empire in the West*, ed. Thomas Blagg and Martin Millet (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1990).

<sup>72</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.1.

*trans Rhenum incolunt* ("living across the Rhine"). The first chapter of Book One introduces two tropes for Caesar regarding the Germani and the Rhine. First, he emphasizes the alienness of the Germani with structures that underscore their belonging elsewhere, in the process preparing his audience for his decision regarding the border of the Galli, at the Rhine. Second, there were conflicting images of the Galli themselves, a factor in Roman rhetoric as demonstrated by Cicero. The *BG* emphasizes the development and sophistication of the Galli and not an elemental, barbarian image. The Helvetii retain some of the latter, heightening the tension in the narrative, but through their positive comparison with the Germani, Caesar's principal target becomes clearer.

Caesar at length defeated the Helvetii outside the Aeduan capital of Bibracte, resettling them in their old land with winter supplies from the Allobroges.<sup>73</sup> "[Caesar] did this for this chief reason, because he did not want the location which the Helvetii had left to be empty, so that the Germani, who live across the Rhine [*trans Rhenum incolunt*], would not cross from their territory into Helvetian territory for the good fields [*bonitum agrorum*] and be at the border [*finitimi*] of the Gallic province and the Allobroges."<sup>74</sup> This passage sees one threat handily eliminated while introducing a greater one. The passage revisits the theme that the Rhine separated the Galli from the Germani. It also indicates the prosperity and development of the Galli by mentioning the "good fields," suggesting that such resources (which the province possessed) invited attack. Third, the passage makes plain the proximity of the threat. If the Germani crossed the Rhine, they

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<sup>73</sup> The Helvetii had burned their property prior to migration. Caesar suggests that it was to prevent second thoughts. It may in reality have been a sacrificial or cultic procedure or attempt to leave possible enemies few chances for loot. Whatever the actual motive, the act fit into Roman ideals of bravery, underscoring the courage of the Helvetii and thus that of their enemies (both Germani and Caesar). *Caes. B Gall.*, 1.5.

<sup>74</sup> *Caes. B Gall.*, 1.28, transl. Carolyn Hammond, Oxford, 1996.



would be abutting the territory of Rome and her dominion. The Helvetii had suffered a major defeat and were therefore weaker than before, but Caesar's victory had also left them dependent and allowed him to act as patron (via the Allobroges). They had a right to return to their own land, which had become included within the frontier zone.

With the Helvetian problem solved, the narrative turns to a convention of the Gallic communities' leading men.<sup>75</sup> Caesar's comparison between the Galli and the Germani begins in earnest with this council. The Galli requested the proconsul's presence to air their concerns, indicating their understanding of Rome's place within the frontier zone. At the meeting, Caesar acts as mediator among the various groups, from investigating allegations against Dumnorix to outlining, in full, the Germanic issue. The narrative does not describe the precise relationship of Ariovistus to Rome. The *BG* instead explains his reprehensible behavior towards the Aedui and, by extension, Rome. From this convention onward, the *BG* is replete with indications that Ariovistus could not be trusted to respect Rome's *dignitas* or her allies. As proconsul of Transalpine Gaul, Caesar took it upon himself to settle the border dispute between the Galli and Germani according to Rome's best interests.

#### The Galli – Cowed Subjects under a Haughty Warlord

The Gallic convention is one of the *BG*'s truly dramatic portions. Language indicative of invasion, of crossing a static object or landmark, is also more common at this point in the narrative, building upon the earlier comparisons between Helvetii and Germani. Diviciacus acts as speaker for the Galli as they "all wept and threw themselves

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<sup>75</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.30. The Gallic envoys asking for the meeting also acknowledge Caesar's assistance to them in defeating the incoming Helvetii. This may have been flattery, but more than likely was Caesar's own reinforcement of the initial danger that brought him there. These communities were probably those of Celtica only. Holmes, *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul*, 634.

at Caesar's feet." He explains how "these wild and savage men [*feri ac barbari*] had conceived a passionate desire for the lands of the Galli, their way of life, and their wealth," but notes that "a worse fate had befallen the victorious Sequani than the defeated Aedui."<sup>76</sup> If any of Caesar's audience suffered from *terror gallicus*, this passage seems destined to shatter it, as it sharply contrasts a weakened but prosperous people and a strong, dangerous one. The former sackers of Rome cannot only be conquered, of which Cicero was confident in 69 B.C., but they were already so, as Ariovistus was showing. The text describes their behavior (*fluentes Caesari ad pedes proiecerunt*) in the same terms used for the defeated, and newly submissive, Helvetii (*ad pedes proiecissent . . . fluentes*) – both groups "falling to his feet, prostrated themselves."<sup>77</sup> The Galli appear as supplicants begging for the protection (and forgiveness?) of Rome. This portrayal synergizes with the fact that Ariovistus, who once possessed relatively few warriors, was continuing his people's migration with a new wave of settlers. The Galli, once numerous, have been cut down in battle (despite their ties to Rome) and suffered the depredations of their assumed ally (also Rome's). The Germani, meanwhile, continued to grow in strength. Gallic *fides*, if not outright dependence, is juxtaposed to Ariovistus' possible lack thereof.

Only their spokesman, the druid Diviciacus, seems unconquered, as he retained his honor by not yielding to Ariovistus' demands for hostages and an oath of obedience to the Sequani.<sup>78</sup> If the Germani, personalized in their leader Ariovistus, are dangerous,

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<sup>76</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.31, transl. Carolyn Hammond, Oxford, 1996. Their way of life is another theme to which Caesar will return, although he notes here "nor was there any contest between the two."

<sup>77</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.27.

<sup>78</sup> These were traditional practices indicating submission and helped to maintain control over the defeated power. Oaths and hostages were customary practices, and also the assurances of loyalty that Caesar tended



the spokesperson for the Galli, Diviciacus, is depicted favorably. Diviciacus' character provides Caesar with a foil for Ariovistus. He remained true to his own status and his people's association to Rome by demonstrating the aristocratic virtue of honor. He had petitioned the Senate for assistance, albeit unsuccessfully. As such, the text shows Diviciacus to be as trustworthy as a Roman might be, and gives Rome's proconsul ample cause to settle the matter.

Caesar underscores the Germanic threat in his description of the damage to Rome's allies, which he gives in terms meant to suggest Rome's own sociopolitical hierarchy. Ariovistus, identified as the *rex* of the Germani, had toppled the Aedui by killing or taking hostage their *omnem nobilitatem*, *omnem senatum*, and *omnem equitatum*. These groups – the nobles (descendents of consulars), the senators (land-owners and junior magistrates), and the cavalrymen (the equestrian order) – formed the basis of the Roman *res publica*.<sup>79</sup> The repetition of *omnem* ("the entire") reinforces the comparison between the near destruction of the Aedui and what Ariovistus might do against Rome in the future by making Ariovistus the enemy of every class, not just a single party. In other words, Caesar's argument against Ariovistus was not just that the Germani were militaristic or ignored Rome's interests, but that they endangered the social fabric of Roman society and that of the frontier zone.

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to demand (a third, indemnities, has a much lower profile in the *BG*). The intent here may be to portray Ariovistus as usurping Rome's position, not just in imitating her practices, but by making such demands upon her allies. This would make sense, because hostages and oaths featured prominently in the practice of *deditio*, which could have a ritualistic overtone and connection with the idea of the *pax deorum*. The point was not only to win, but to be acknowledged as the victor, with all rights to property and acknowledgement of the justness of the war. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 217-219; Richardson, *Hispaniae*, 142-143.

<sup>79</sup> In his defense of Milo, Cicero mocks his opponent by anthropomorphizing society: "The Senate mourns; the equestrian order is inconsolable; the whole community is bowed down with affliction; the municipalities wear the garb of woe; the colonies are heartbroken; why, the very fields are pining. . . ." Aside from the elite, only the political unit counts. *Cic. Mil.*, 8.20.

After Diviciacus' speech, the *BG* again displays the Galli as supplicants, and this is especially true of the Sequani, who were worse off for joining with Ariovistus than for opposing him. With the Germani "inside their territory" (*intra finis suos*), they cannot escape from Ariovistus' influence.<sup>80</sup> Caesar acted in proconsular fashion and agrees to settle the dispute, offering the Sequani his patronage in the process.<sup>81</sup> He professed the desire to employ his status to marshal a receptive hearing from Ariovistus while reiterating the principal reasons for concern: close relations with the Aedui (*fratres consanguineosque* – "brothers and family members") who have suffered injury, the growing number of Germani who continue to enter Gallia, and Ariovistus' reported arrogance. He also compared the contemporary situation and with the invasion of the Cimbri and Teutoni, including a reminder of proximity to Roman territory.<sup>82</sup> This comparison reinforces the earlier imagery of the supplicant Galli, especially the pathetic Sequani, and further vilifies Ariovistus as being beyond his bounds.

In an earlier passage regarding the Helvetian migration, Caesar had characterized the Rhone and the Rhine in quite different ways. While the Rhine was *latissimo atque altissimo* ("very wide and quite deep"), the Rhone had *non nullis locis vado transitur* ("a shallow place to cross in no few locations").<sup>83</sup> The use of superlatives to describe the Rhine's impassability contrasts with a double negative (*non nullis*, lit. "not none") when describing the traversable Rhone. The Rhone was also a major trade route, whereas

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<sup>80</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, i.32.

<sup>81</sup> This constituted a perceived law, with the weak obeying the strong and the strong shielding the weak. Patron client relations may have been eclipsed in Rome, but foreigners and provincials might still require an agent within the Roman system. P. A. Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 390-421; E. Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, second edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 15.

<sup>82</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, i.33. Marius defeated the Cimbri near the Po River, and Caesar notes that only the Rhone stands between the land of the Sequani and "our province" (i.e. Transalpine Gaul).

<sup>83</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, i.2, i.6.



Roman merchants had not had much dealing across the Rhine. Clearly, Caesar thought (or meant others to think) that the Rhine was far more formidable than the more familiar river. The Rhine was not especially defensible, at least for long, so the practical solution was to pursue and engage the enemy. The Rhine was difficult to cross in the first place, so it was crucial to prevent an established beachhead. Caesar therefore set out the danger of an unrestrained Ariovistus before even encountering him. He credited Diviciacus with making the suggestion that “in a few years they [the Galli] would all be driven out of Gaul, and in turn all the German[i] would cross the Rhine.”<sup>84</sup> This theme of movement across a fixed point is recurring – *Rhenum transisse*; *Rhenum transire*; *Rhenum traducatur* – and such language culminates after the speech: *Rhenum transire et in Galliam . . . venire* (“[they] crossed the Rhine and came into Gaul”).<sup>85</sup> The Germani had not just attacked a people friendly to Rome, they were continuing to do so, and, above all, they had passed a known marker and come *into* Gaul. In other words, the danger to the frontier aside, the Germani simply did not belong in Gallia. Caesar successfully casts Ariovistus and the Germani as a group less trustworthy than the Galli, more terrible than the Galli, and, completely unlike the Galli, in a place they should not be.

After the convention, Caesar began marching into Sequani territory, heading for their citadel of Vesontio. Along the way, he exchanged several missives with his opponent. From the convention to the onset of battle, the *BG* describes a chieftain in every way worthy of the charges leveled previously, while Caesar continues to portray himself as Rome’s champion and Gallia’s patron. Ariovistus did not respect Caesar’s *beneficio . . . auctoritate* as Caesar had predicted to the Gauls. He proved arrogant,

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<sup>84</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.31.

<sup>85</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.33.

cowardly, and dishonorable – Ariovistus would not come to Caesar when requested, he would not come without an army, and he did not justify himself beyond the right of conquest (*ius belli*).<sup>86</sup> In other words, he would not act as a faithful (*in fidem*) ally should. This series of exchanges follows a pattern according to which Caesar and Ariovistus explain their positions, only for the latter to prove intractable to the requests of the proconsul to the point of attacking during the process. Caesar's principle demands are the restoration of hostages and property to the Aedui and for Ariovistus to stop the flow of Germani into Gaul.<sup>87</sup> Ariovistus' reply in the first exchange, which takes place through envoys, consisted of a show of strength. Ariovistus questioned the right of Rome's proconsul to make such demands, as, operating under *ius belli*, the Aeduan relationship with Rome could not protect them if they should provoke him.<sup>88</sup> The Germanic leader thus placed the exercise of might above and beyond the obligations inherent within his relationship to Rome, obligations even the Helvetii had respected.<sup>89</sup> Ariovistus indeed "had assumed such haughtiness as was not to be borne."<sup>90</sup>

#### Ariovistus -- A Villainous Leader

Caesar's rhetoric does not rely entirely upon character assassination. During the march, messengers from the Aedui and Treveri reported the massing of Suebi along the

<sup>86</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.34. Caesar, of course, ultimately drew his authority from the Senate and people of Rome.

<sup>87</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.35; 1.43.

<sup>88</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.36.

<sup>89</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.7 (they awaited Caesar's answer to their request for passage); 1.13 (they asked him to provide a place to settle).

<sup>90</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.33. The Romans required suitable respect for their honor, not just personal *dignitas*. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, 171-194.



Rhine, with one of the Germanic leaders tellingly named Cimberius.<sup>91</sup> The appearance of these new Germani “proved” that Ariovistus did plan to invade, and at least suggested an intended ambush for Caesar as well. The Roman forces nonetheless claimed the Sequani *oppidum* of Vesontio before the Germani. Once there, the Roman officers almost staged a mutiny, although Caesar managed to regain control quickly. The aborted mutiny was not as important in itself as Caesar’s means of regaining control, his insistence that the most effective defense against the Germani was Rome’s martial strength.<sup>92</sup> The ability of Rome to protect herself and her allies by meeting enemies openly in the field underscored her place in the world (the *pax deorum*, at which Caesar hints) and demonstrated the superiority of the Roman way of life. There was no greater expression of a people’s moral virtue than the ability to face and defeat a foe in pitched battle, a standard which the Germani had not met even in the defeat of the Galli (this will be discussed in Chapter Three). Ariovistus apparently felt the same, “since he was now offering unasked what he had previously refused to do when expressly requested,” and sought a personal parley with Caesar.<sup>93</sup>

The face-to-face meeting marks the second time Ariovistus justified the Gallic account of arrogance and undue destruction. With rhetorical flourish, Rome’s proconsul again acts with consideration, while the supposed friend proves recalcitrant. Caesar again expresses Rome’s superior position in the relationship, if in more diplomatic terms than before, emphasizing the result of Roman custom and reiterating his demands. Rome’s

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<sup>91</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.37. It is difficult to know, but it seems likely that this part at least was Caesar’s own narrative invention. He could not know that he would be having much more intimate contact with the Treveri and Suebi three years later.

<sup>92</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.38-1.40.

<sup>93</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.42.

favor leads to increased, not reduced, prosperity for those to whom it is awarded, explicitly declaring that involvement within the Roman frontier was to the benefit of the population.<sup>94</sup> Ariovistus brushes these concerns aside more dramatically than before, and proceeds to act every inch the unworthy recipient and haughty king as he had earlier by proxy.<sup>95</sup> This exchange ended after the Germani began to attack Caesar's bodyguard, prompting Caesar to withdraw. A second request to parley comes not long after, but Caesar sends envoys instead of going personally. Although the narrative does not identify this incident as an ambush, Caesar avoided dispatching any of his officers due to safety concerns. The provincials that he did dispatch were promptly imprisoned.<sup>96</sup> This final charge of Ariovistus' lack of *fides*, that he would violate the sanctity of envoys, proved a moot point, as the armies set out on their respective maneuvering.

Caesar's argument against the Germani entered its final stages during the face-to-face meeting. The alien *rex* defended himself only to again turn to threatening Caesar: he had crossed the Rhine (*transisse Rhenum*) when asked by the Galli; he was in Gaul for wealth (*spe magnisque praemiis*) which he had won by *iure belli* and imposed as victor (*victores victis imponere*); the Galli (*omnis gallis civitates* – "all the Gallic communities") had attacked him and he had won; they could try again, but could not

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<sup>94</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.43.

<sup>95</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.44. Interestingly, Caesar gives Ariovistus a speech detailing inconsistencies in Rome's imperialistic behavior, in more general terms than the occasional passage criticizing the Senate's sloth. Although the criticisms are given in detail, Caesar brushes them off in reply. One scholar suggests that this was a fairly common feature of Roman literature, implying that the Romans were not concerned for the morality of their activities, at least in any universal sense. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 215-224. Dealing with another incident in Tacitus' *Agricola*, Isaac concludes (221): "the reader is left with the conviction that the accusations of the enemy commander are true, but, in Roman eyes irrelevant."

<sup>95</sup> Ariovistus claims to have a close connection, through messengers, with leading men in Rome, and thus knows that killing Caesar would earn him favor. Furthermore, he attempts to dismiss Caesar by offering himself as a proxy over Gaul. These claims, and the offer, are fraught with problems of interpretation beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>96</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.47.



claim peace without tribute (*stipendium*); he had accepted the *amiciti[a] populi romani* as an *ornamento et praesidio, non detrimento* (“a distinction and a advantage, not an injury”) so if he had to give up the tribute this particular “honor” would be worthless. Ariovistus also addressed Caesar’s concerns, claiming the influx of settlers was for his own protection and that he had *a priori* rights to Gaul anyway because of the invitation and his martial success. Just as Caesar had extolled Rome’s role in increasing the fortunes of her allies, Ariovistus proclaims its worthlessness, citing the failure of Rome to aid the Aedui against the Sequani. He also questioned the support of the Senate for Caesar.<sup>97</sup> With the possible exception of his future imprisonment of the envoys, the passage describing the face-to-face meeting presents Ariovistus’ villainy, given a foundation by Diviciacus at the Gallic convention, in its full splendor. Neither the honor of Rome nor the authority of the proconsul would protect the frontier from the Germanic chieftain.

The face-to-face meeting is the real culmination of Caesar’s argument. At this point in the narrative, Caesar remains conciliatory and does not demand that the Germani leave Gaul, merely that they stop coming over the Rhine into Gaul and that they restore the property of Rome’s allies, the Aedui. Caesar appeals to his authority as proconsul, which Ariovistus, an *amicus*, should respect. The chieftain must respect the decisions of the Senate and Rome’s policy of strengthening her friends and allies, not looting them. Ariovistus, however, recognizes only the only law of war (superior strength), and that it is the place of the victor to dictate terms. Having defeated all the Gallic communities, he

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<sup>97</sup> Ariovistus claims to have a close connection, through messengers, with leading men in Rome, and thus knows that killing Caesar would earn him favor. Furthermore, he attempts to dismiss Caesar by offering himself as a proxy over Gaul. These claims, and the offer, are difficult enough to prove, let alone Caesar’s reasons to include them.

gained full power over it regardless of any boundaries. Caesar's explicit identification of Ariovistus as *rex* may be a reference to Rome's own history of kings, especially given the chieftain's attack on the republican classes of the Aedui. Perhaps worst of all, Ariovistus sought to subvert the honor that the Senate bestowed upon him for his own glorification. He was not the type of leader that Rome could accommodate, nor, by extension, were the *feri ac barbari trans Rhenum incolunt* ("fierce and wild people living across the Rhine") that he ruled. As proconsul, a position with obligations both to protect regional allies and to settle border disputes, Caesar could not accept such an uncontrollable force within the frontier zone. Indeed, warfare commenced almost immediately after the meeting. Regardless of the actual facts, Caesar's argument that Ariovistus' character, and by extension his people's nature, were undesirable and untrustworthy in Gaul justified the only possible solution – total victory. This meant a Gaul free of Germani, with the Rhine separating Gallia from these others.

Book One of the *BG* ends with the defeat of Ariovistus. The Germani, both those facing Caesar and those (if any) further north, were driven away from the Rhine's banks. Although Ariovistus survived the rout, the victory was decisive. Just as the Germani had come *trans Rhenum*, news of their defeat also traveled *trans Rhenum*.<sup>98</sup> No more Germani threatened to follow their predecessors for the time being, and Caesar departed for Cisalpine Gaul. The Rhine River remained a marker for the *finis* of individual groups, but its underpinnings as something more had appeared. With clearly dangerous people living on the western side, the logical conclusion was that the Roman frontier must include it, or else those groups which Rome relied on to buffer its actual territory

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<sup>98</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.54.



(and with whom she traded) would fall, as the Aedui and Sequani almost had. The Helvetii may have been the most dangerous of the Galli, but they were still Galli. Once defeated, they could remain within the frontier and possibly strengthen it. The Germani, however, had demonstrated under, or because of, their king that they could and would upset Rome's dominion. The Gallic Wars did not end with Ariovistus' defeat. Caesar still possessed four years of his proconsular command, and, having discovered one outside threat that could only be contained by enforcing Rome's *imperium* up to major waterways, he would proceed to bring as much of *Gallia circum Celtica* under the city's dominion as possible. For the next two years, he sought to complete this task of preventing another external threat to central Gaul from injuring Rome's interests. In 58 B.C., the Rhine, whose length Caesar had not yet measured, was a military and political foundation for such stability.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SEPARATING THE RIGHT FROM THE LEFT

Modern scholars observe that “ignorance, not knowledge of the world which she tried to conquer was most characteristic of Republican Rome.”<sup>99</sup> Army campaigns were the chief means of encountering and identifying new peoples and lands during the period.<sup>100</sup> Military commanders were typically of the highest social and political class, members of the Senate who had held one of the higher magistracies in Rome. Caesar’s proconsulship was unusual for its duration, initially five years, when the typical governor would only serve for one year. These short tenures in distant regions did not aid the gathering and dissemination of specialized knowledge because the governors were chiefly commanders campaigning relatively close to their provinces, within frontier zones. These elites campaigned partly for political purposes as a successful military venture provided a significant boost to personal prestige and status.<sup>101</sup> If anything, they

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<sup>99</sup> N. J. E. Austin and N. B. Rankov, *Exploratorio: Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1995), 99-112. The Republican system of independent, annual governors led only to fragmentary information based on existing concerns. The consolidation of territory into permanent provinces during the Principate changed this by encouraging mapping and supported a semi-permanent administrative staff. For this process, see Claude Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994), 129-175.

<sup>100</sup> Susan P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 26-66. The Romans divided space via itineraries so the army was a major element in “discovering” new nations and regions. The time traveled and the public spectacle of the triumph was a key way of making them understandable to the Roman populace. On the other hand, tradition remained a powerful force even in intellectual pursuits, so not everyone consistently pursued the most accurate information in the face of older ideas.

<sup>101</sup> William V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327-70 BC* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 21-26. Harris observes: “Through most of the middle Republic about one consul in three celebrated



concentrated on autobiographical accounts with ethnographic and geographic details rather than systematic descriptive texts.

Caesar was of consular rank and the *BG* was intended to serve a public purpose during his lifetime. Caesar set the Rhine as the boundary between the Galli and the Germani principally to settle the frontier issues that drew him into Gaul in 58 B.C. There was an ethnographic component in that the laws, customs, and language that he believed split the Gallic peoples among themselves likewise separated all of them from their eastern neighbors. The *BG* does not concentrate on these differences until later books, and the text does not again concentrate on the Germani or the Rhine until Book Four.

Caesar's negative portrayal of Ariovistus in Book One was not to disguise any intent to cross the river himself in 58. Instead, the Roman army campaigned among the more familiar groups surrounding Celtica, including in the Alps, over the next two years. In 55 B.C., however, some Germani again attempted to cross the Rhine, this time further north, around the territory of the Belgae.<sup>102</sup> Although Caesar had defeated some of the Belgae soon after defeating Ariovistus, this portion of Gaul and its inhabitants were still largely unfamiliar to Rome. In Book One, Caesar's use of the river was political, separating communities within the frontier zone from newcomers that he deemed unreliable. This study now turns to the *BG*'s later books, especially Four, Five, and Six, which describe the second phase of Caesar's contact with the Rhine from 55 to 53 B.C., along its upper reaches. The peoples within northeastern Gaul were of a mixed nature,

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a triumph, either in his consulship or in his promagistracy." The circumstances of the Late Republic were different, of course, but the triumph remained the premier way for an aristocrat to demonstrate his status.

<sup>102</sup> Most of the activity in the following three years takes place between the Seine and the Rhine rivers.

typically Germanic in descent but Gallic in custom. The distinction between the two peoples marked by the Rhine increasingly a cultural one.

This chapter will concentrate on how Caesar identified the peoples along the Rhine from 55 to 53 B.C. The perceived features of racial and ethnic identity for Rome of the Late Republic, and more specifically Julius Caesar's perception of it, will be the principal focus. This chapter contains two parts. The first is a general discussion of the characteristics that Romans of the Late Republic considered significant in identifying basic groups, or *what* a people were. The most basic characteristic, an assumed autochthony on a fixed piece of land has already been introduced. The second part of this chapter will study the specific characterizations of the Galli and Germani that Caesar advances and the Rhine's place within the paradigm. As will be shown, Caesar outlines complex differences between the Galli and Germani in the later books of the *BG* in a systematic description, an element absent from Book One. It will be argued that, having decided that the Germani were too intractable, Caesar maintained his Rhine policy while adapting it beyond a political context.

#### Cornerstone – The Gallic Community

The importance of the Galli in Roman history and political life has already been mentioned, as has Rome's entrenchment in Gallic territory. The roving war horde of the fourth century B.C. was not Rome's only experience of the Gauls by the mid-first century. Gallic *oppida* such as Bibracte or Vesontio had evolved from hill-forts into important trading and political centers, while most groups evidently organized oligarchic governments rather than chieftainships.<sup>103</sup> Commerce between the Roman world and

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<sup>103</sup> T. Riche Holmes, *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul*, second edition (New York: AMS Press, 1971), 504-505.



central Gaul steadily increased from the second century B.C. on, bringing trade goods, coinage, and ideas into the interior. The Galli nevertheless remained a prototypical, barbarian foe, the very embodiment of the uncivilized enemy for several hundred years of the Republic's existence.<sup>104</sup> Caesar combats this image in Book One with his portrayal of the Gallic leaders when he begins his argument against Ariovistus, but the *BG* possesses a strain of ambiguity regarding the Galli. Book One offered a significant point of difference between the Galli and the Germani – as duplicitous as they could be, the Galli could be trusted *in fidem*, while the Germani could not. Ariovistus had crossed the Rhine into Gaul to war with the inhabitants, leading his Germani in a transgression of the frontier zone in both its geographic and political aspects.<sup>105</sup> Ethnicity – *lingua, institutes, legibus* – played a small part in Caesar's descriptions in his first three books. Overall, however, his identification of peoples relied upon politics, namely their ruler(s) and their relation to Rome, and geographical origin, expressed in the themes of autochthony and migration.

Caesar's proconsular activities did not rely upon any pre-existing distinction between Galli and Germani, although Book One insists upon some disparity between them. The proconsul operated amid *civitates* (communities), the individually organized Gallic groups consisting of clients, cantons, and similar subdivisions. The use of *civitas* to describe the Galli is significant because it indicates how Caesar visualized the state of Gallic society: politically organized towns with associated fields and a social system

<sup>104</sup> Sall. *Cat.*, 7. Put into the mouth of Cato, he calls the Gauls "the bitterest foes of the Roman people."

<sup>105</sup> For how the Rhine functioned as a border during the Principate, see Claude Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire*, 7-24, 189-190. Nicolet primarily discusses Agrippa's map, one of the earliest attempts during the Principate to precisely describe the known world through representational units. This effort partly rested upon the connection between a land and its inhabitants, ties established by lineage and custom, and was the culmination of Republican thinking (itself derived from the ownership of land in Italy).

centering on a public class of landowners, headed by prestigious offices, and unified by laws and custom. This structure was akin to the body politic of Italy.<sup>106</sup> These political and social characteristics were associated with settled agriculture, which was especially indicative of civilization (*humanitas* – see below) to the Romans. Nomadism and pastoralism, on the other hand, implied barbarity. Gallic *oppida* were politically and economically central, and many of Caesar's more dramatic battles were fought to control them.<sup>107</sup> Once the site was held, the *civitates* was held, its aristocracy could be accommodated, and Rome's dominion could grow. Nomadic hunter-herder-bands, like Ariovistus, displaced the public class that patronized the settlements precisely because of their mobility. They had no moral ties to the land through history or cult (discussed below). The *BG* overwhelmingly speaks of *civitates* when indicating the Galli. In other words, Caesar describes the Galli in terms of politically and legally organized communities and not "tribal" units.

Common Latin words for foreign populations include *civitas* (community, citizenry, etc.), *gens* (tribe, family, line, etc.), and *natio* (nation, people).<sup>108</sup> *Gens* and *natio* are often synonymous and both were used to describe unknown and "barbaric"

<sup>106</sup> A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, second edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 5-25. Sherwin-White discusses the early development of the Roman community, including its own hybridized origins and the role of affiliated peoples.

<sup>107</sup> Notable battles included: Bibracte, the chief town of the Aedui near where Caesar defeated the Helvetii; Vesontio, the citadel of the Sequani where Caesar defeated Ariovistus; Alesia, the decisive "final" battle of the entire conflict. The *oppida* represented sufficient collections of surplus capital that the Gauls actually could support Caesar's troops during the winter months (a practice which was not well received, however). For the role of these settlements post-conquest, see J. F. Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 11, 141-143; Kevin Greene, *The Archaeology of the Roman Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 160-167; Barry Cunliffe, *The Oxford Illustrated Prehistory of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 351-353. The Germani were not quite as migratory as Caesar suggests, as their reported numbers should indicate. Furthermore, primitive *oppida* (Hallstatt period and earlier) exist well past the Rhine, but they did not develop to the point of those in Celtica. These sites are of varying date, but all from well before the first century.

<sup>108</sup> Charlton Lewis, ed., *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879).



peoples, with *natio* being the less loaded word. While *natio* indicates that a group had common characteristics or identity, *gens* strongly denotes blood relations, in terms of lineage (clan) or physical stock (race). The Aedui, for example, were a *civitas* because they had a distinct social order with leading men who formed a central authority for a disparate group of people ranging from a noble like Dumnorix to a dependent like one of his cavalrymen. The Aedui as a *natio* or *gens* would be a smaller group than the Aedui as a *civitas* because those relationships could not be extended by membership, such as the awarding of citizenship or acceptance as a client. The Romans identified their neighbors within the context of their social and political system. What mattered were the group's relations to Rome, so the Aedui as a *civitas* would not necessarily consist of one ethnicity but rather the shared identity of their elite – the nobles, senators, and equestrians. In broader terms, identity of the Aedui as a people, rather than a community, depended upon the fact that they were Galli. Explaining *what* the Galli were is not a priority of the *BG*, but it goes into great detail to outline *who* they were.

That Caesar prefers *civitas* over *gens* when identifying specific Gallic groups does more than dispel an old image of the Galli. It also places them at an intermediate stage of “otherness” compared to the Romans. This otherness was more than simple geographic unfamiliarity considering that Republican Rome was a ranked society. Social status requires a social hierarchy, so membership in city-centered communities, *civitates*, was a key component to Roman ideas of identity. Each community had a degree of prestige and privilege that membership provided. In addition, membership was itself ranked, with

full citizenship providing the highest level of rights to property or services.<sup>109</sup> Roman law, for example, allowed various privileges to individuals based upon their level of citizenship. One advantage of Roman citizenship was that it permitted full access to Roman courts and shielded the possessor from abuse by magistrates, including execution.<sup>110</sup> These types of privileges acted as checks on the *imperium* of officials and could boost an individual's status within their own community. Relationships between communities had a similar hierarchy and included *civitates sine suffragio*, wherein the community members had the honor of nominal inclusion, the status of *socios* (military allies), and *amicitia*, among others.<sup>111</sup> Regardless of the specifics of membership or citizenship, the *civitas* was the source of political and social identity. By identifying the Gallic groups as communities instead of tribes, Caesar explicitly acknowledged that they had a place within these networks. An unaffiliated tribe (*gens*) might be a danger, but a *civitas* had a distinct identity formed from their relationship to Rome spelled out either in a treaty or by arrangement with a magistrate.<sup>112</sup> The commonality involved in a *civitas* was much more complex than one of lineage or breeding group. It was political and social, giving the members an identity to outsiders and themselves, effectively saying *who* they were.

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<sup>109</sup> See Joyce Reynolds, "Cities," in *Administration of the Roman Empire*, Exeter Studies in History No. 18, ed. David C. Braud (Exeter: Short Run Press Ltd., 1988); Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, 5-7.

<sup>110</sup> In particular, Roman citizenship provided access to the law courts, rights regarding property (especially contracts), and protections against some punishments. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 95-96; P. A. Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 122-125. It also had its disadvantages at times such as during the Mithradatic wars when he encouraged Mediterranean pirates to harass the Romans specifically.

<sup>111</sup> Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, 165-169.

<sup>112</sup> For the frontier, see Stephen L. Dyson, *The Creation of the Roman Frontier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), especially 45-62 (the Veneti in northern Italy), 136-154 (the Arverni in continental Gaul); Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, 20-25, 125-127.



If Rome in general and Caesar in particular dealt mostly with others on the basis of rank, they were aware of the larger, more abstract element of identity. The Roman worldview focused upon the past, making tradition the single greatest source of legitimacy.<sup>113</sup> Lineage and autochthony – a chain of descent in people and property – were among the most important factors in defining *what* a group was. Both Romans and Greeks sought the racial origins of the Gauls in ancestors or legendary figures and there was little consensus regarding the differences between Galli and Germani during the Republic.<sup>114</sup> Caesar consistently maintains a distinction in Book One, but does not systematically outline it until Book Six. His Rhine policy was political for it separated two groups based upon Rome's interest and did not inherently involve the identity of the people beyond their collective membership in terms of *civitates*. This was one reason to equate a group and its leaders, or chieftain. Writing half a century later, Strabo, drawing upon Posidonius, proclaims "these two nations [Germani and Galli], both by nature and in their form of government, are similar and related to each other."<sup>115</sup> Caesar speculates as to Gallic origins, but offers no good genetic difference between the Galli and Germani, other than their respective occupation of territory relative to the Rhine.<sup>116</sup> Other factors had a minor role in identification as well, but usually served to distinguish between two otherwise similar groups. The Romans were well aware that language, for example, could be acquired. While one's language or dialect could increase one's prestige or

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<sup>113</sup> Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 149-161.

<sup>114</sup> J. H. C. Williams, *Beyond the Rubicon: Romans and Gauls in Republican Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 111-116.

<sup>115</sup> Strabo *Geogr.*, 4.4.2, transl. H. C. Hamilton, London, 1854. Strabo's word for "nation" is the Greek *ethnoi*, which is comparable to the Latin *natio*.

<sup>116</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 6.18; Strabo *Geogr.*, 7.1.2.

status within a community, class, or faction, it did not override membership as the main source of identity.<sup>117</sup> Ariovistus spoke Gallic due to habit and not as a native, a detail that Caesar carefully notes.<sup>118</sup> The parameters emphasized in the *BG* are not physical traits or even lineage, but rather cultural traits embodied in economic mode, political organization, and custom.

Caesar continually stresses the difference in the lifestyles between the Galli and Germani in the *BG*. He learned of Gallic colonies east of the Rhine and explains them as remnants of past Gallic vitality (in spirit). He goes on to declare that those colonists had become as if Germani and, therefore, were Germanic themselves:

But during an earlier period, when the Galli surpassed the Germani in courage [*virtus*], and because of great population and a need for land, they raided beyond [their borders] and sent colonies across the Rhine . . . [some of these colonists] occupied and settled there . . . Now they endure the same helplessness, poverty, and suffering in which the Germani remain. They possess the same living [*victus*, probably "food," but possibly broader] and clothing [*cultu corporis*, "cultivation of the body"]. The Galli, however, in proximity to the province, knowing many goods from across the sea . . . The Galli gradually became accustomed to defeat and were conquered in many battles so that they do not believe themselves comparable in bravery with the Germani.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> J. N. Adams, "'Komanitas' and the Latin Language," *Classical Quarterly* (2003), 184-205. Cf. J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens* (Chapel Hill: The University of Carolina Press, 1979), 44-46, 136-138; Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic*, 114-118; Elizabeth Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985), 19-37. Evidence points to a trend of nativism within the senatorial class during the Late Republic, in which Caesar may have been quite involved, see Lindsay G. H. Hall, "'Ratio' and 'Romanitas' in the Bellum Gallicum," in *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments*, ed. Kathryn Welch and Anton Powell (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1998). Hall suggests that Caesar, much like Cicero, promoted a genesis of Latin material independent of Greek models, and also speculates that his intended audience was "middle Italy," those of some means outside the reigning political and social order that did not possess access to Greek or other cultural material. Cf. Elizabeth Rawson, "Lucius Crassus and Cicero: The Formation of a Statesman," in *Roman Culture and Society: Collected Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 16-34. Rawson suggests that Hellenism was tied to the Sullan faction, with Marians (such as Caesar) promoting homegrown pursuits.

<sup>118</sup> In dispatching his two final envoys to Ariovistus (after the face-to-face meeting), Caesar chose two provincials, one of whom was fluent in Gallic. *Caes. B Gall.*, 1.47.

<sup>119</sup> *Caes. B Gall.*, 6.24. Caesar is specifically speaking of the Volcae Tectosages and the Hercynian Forest. While he does give some information on Greek knowledge of the specific group and their territory, he does question the relation between the specific group and the more general comparison he is making..



In other words, the inner characteristic (*virtus*) depended upon cultural factors and material prosperity. Too much riches created the pathetic showing at the Gallic convention, but too little had two drawbacks. The superior Gallic bravery became blunted by settling within new territory as the settlers, for lack of a better term, degenerated away from their own fields. It nonetheless remained at a superior state to the indolence that took hold of Gaul. The implication is that the two peoples, the Galli and the Germani, were not biologically distinct (*gens*) but different ethnicities (*natio* at least, *civitas* at best), defined not so much by *lingua*, *institutes*, and *legibus* (language, customs, and laws) as prosaic issues of what one ate and wore. The common element for these standards was political organization. The Galli organized themselves into *civitates* while the Germani did not. A *civitas* relied upon wealth, which meant agriculture, the traditional pastime of Rome's elite.<sup>120</sup>

Agriculture consumed the Roman aristocracy to such a degree that one of Rome's earliest literary fashions revolved around agricultural treatises, one of which specifically denied the equality of livestock with actual cultivation.<sup>121</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Roman elite viewed their own values as the standard of civilization, which is to say that *humanitas* (civilization, culture) stemmed from *urbanitas*, respectable agriculture, and similar qualities.<sup>122</sup> The values of the Roman elite originated in the management of

<sup>120</sup> Cic. *Att.*, 1.16. Cicero describes the trial of Clodius, whose jury was untrustworthy primarily because of their vulnerability to bribes (which occurred) due to poor character/finances. He also compares the honest men with the robbers. The latter category largely consisted of recipients of the dole who depended upon others for their livelihood, thus draining, not supporting, the public realm.

<sup>121</sup> Keeping animals does not grow crops, and the growing of crops on estates was both artful and a science that could (with good land and in pleasing climate) provide happiness and security. Varro *Rust.*, 1.2-1.4.

<sup>122</sup> Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman, The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55-59. Cf. Cic. *Fam.*, 3.8. In his letter, Cicero mentions in passing that *urbanem* ("culture") has replaced *sapientem* ("common-sense") in aristocratic parlance. While probably an ironic joke, it still testifies to the value in fashion.

property and expressed itself in the public realm where an individual was judged for his conduct while acting as a model for others. The public nature of conduct underscored Roman thoughts on morality and civilized behavior, especially *libertas*, the political freedom offered by citizenship to compete with peers for regard and status.<sup>123</sup> Liberty consisted of the right to speak publicly in favor of political activities, including matters of peace and war.<sup>124</sup> Liberty in turn was won and kept by those brave enough to maintain and defend the public realm as a whole, the public realm itself being an aggregate of property owned by the brave.<sup>125</sup> *Humanitas* was theoretically obtainable by any people who adopted the *civitas* and *mores* necessary for this system. In a legal argument, Cicero claimed civilized beings (*doctis*, those having been taught) were ruled by reason while barbarians responded to necessity, and humankind as a whole, *gentes*, was ruled by custom, *mos*.<sup>126</sup> The *mores* as a whole depended upon age for respectability, propriety for validity, and the virtue of character. Qualities of note included honoring one's ancestors by following their example, providing due to the deities through proper cultic practices, and the courage to defend one's own property, and thus the collective property of one's countrymen, on the battlefield. Overall, the Romans of the Late Republic perceived civilization as an acquired characteristic.

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<sup>123</sup> Cic. *Pis.*, 16.37. *Libertas* is used metonymically for citizenship. Caesar often explains Gallic motivations in terms of concern for their own liberty, which may have indicated an underlying respect for them in that they were not "natural slaves" of certain Greek theories. See Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 414.

<sup>124</sup> P. A. Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic*, 296-297, 328-239, 349-350.

<sup>125</sup> Sall. *Cat.*, 6.

<sup>126</sup> Cic. *Mil.*, 11.30. The context of the argument involves political violence. It has been suggested that Cicero's paradigm was a matter of political effectiveness. Luxury and servitude, which brought inevitable deterioration, could lead to the moral improvement of some. This improvement was not equality but advancement to an intermediate position of worth with credit for the change going to the state and those controlling it. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 87-89, 184-186.



By explicitly and continually describing the peoples of Gaul in terms familiar to the Romans, Caesar identified the Galli as participants within the *res publica*. With Caesar as patron, their greater development would become recognized, heightening their status within Rome's eyes. Meanwhile, the negative image could go to the people juxtaposed to the Galli, the Germani. The appellation of "barbarian" was the most negative expression of a people in Latin. The *BG* employs it rarely and almost never to refer to the Galli.<sup>127</sup> If barbarian meant uncivilized in habit and custom, then Caesar's usage is consistent with a Gaul not too different from Italy.<sup>128</sup> Their *fides* – the Galli's adherence to the obligations inherent within their relationship to Rome – was also a factor. By accepting diplomatic relations with Rome, the Galli accepted obligations to provide resources and to accede to the "power and dominion of the Roman people."<sup>129</sup> The Galli had proved dutiful in Book One and Caesar takes pains not to portray them as otherwise.<sup>130</sup>

Lest it seem disingenuous, Caesar's use of *civitas* likely came naturally because of real characteristics of the Gallic population. The archaeological record clearly shows that the Galli did possess a way of life similar to that of the Mediterranean in the first century. Their settlements, *oppida*, were centers of economic activity, for both local

<sup>127</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.31, 1.33 (both describing Ariovistus); 1.40 (the Germani); 1.44 (Ariovistus, evidently meaning 'ignorant'); 2.35 (the Germani); 4.10 (referring to insular peoples); 4.17 (the Germani); 4.21 (the Britons); 4.22 (Galli calling themselves barbarians as an excuse); 4.23, 4.25, 4.34 (the Britons); 5.34 (the Eburones, a group of Belgae, in the context of guerilla tactics); 5.54 (Galli, evidently meaning 'rebellious' or 'belligerent'); 6.10 (the Suebi, evidently meaning 'ignorant'); 6.29 (the Germani); 6.34 (the Eburones, in the context of guerilla tactics); 6.35, 6.37, 6.39-6.41 (the Germani). This survey is not exhaustive, but it demonstrates the various connotations of the word as well as Caesar's reluctance to use it for the Galli.

<sup>128</sup> Williams, *Beyond the Rubicon*, 111-128. The traditional Republican image of the Galli in the second century B.C. was nomadic. They represented the untamed wilderness opposed to the Greek (and Roman) lifestyle of ordered communities. This stereotype remained into the Principate, even for Roman citizens, but without its intellectual validity.

<sup>129</sup> Cic. *Font.*, 5.12.

<sup>130</sup> He nevertheless often cautions about the excitability of the Galli, for example: Caes. *B Gall.*, 2.3.

production and long-distance bulk trade.<sup>131</sup> Property owners, with Equestrian friends in Rome to provide loans, could challenge traditional chieftainships based on prestige goods and raiding for political power.<sup>132</sup> Gallic manners were becoming more urbane, with some, such as Diviciacus, being especially close to Rome. Others, like his brother Dumnorix, continued to adhere to the older style, and these chieftains gained less from contemporary ties with Rome. In short, the Galli of Celtica in 58 B.C. were civilized under the Roman paradigm. The migrating Germani were not. A political border at first, the Rhine would become an ethnographic dividing point during the second phase of operations, beginning in 55.

Caesar might have thought well of Gallic sophistication, but he thought poorly of Gallic character. According to the *BG*, the Gauls were “impulsive and sudden in their decision-making,” “quick to take decisions and even eager for political change,” and never forgot their “ancient reputation for war.”<sup>133</sup> If one accepts Caesar’s basic portrayal of Gallic divisions, such as those described in the convention of Book One, Caesar’s decisions make political sense. His campaigns generally settled matters within Gaul. From 55 to 53 B.C. Caesar campaigned on either side of the Upper Rhine, repeatedly at odds with hybridized groups like the Eburones (Belgic) and the Treveri. This second phase of Rhine activity included a major revolt by the Treveri and their allies in the winter of 54 that was one of the most dangerous potential setbacks during the Gallic Wars. This revolt, shortly before the more famous Gallic uprising led by Vercingetorix

<sup>131</sup> Cic. *Font.*, 9.19; Cunliffe, *The Oxford Illustrated Prehistory of Europe*, 429. The effect of this, of course, was that Rome could conquer people who relied upon specific sites for defense, and integrate people who might aspire to similar municipal positions.

<sup>132</sup> Dyson, *The Creation of the Roman Frontier*, 164-170.

<sup>133</sup> *Caes. B Gall.*, 3.8, 4.5, 5.54, transl. Carolyn Hammond, Oxford, 1996. The difficulty of maintaining pro-Roman rulers is a subdued but recurring theme.



(in 52), consisted of those “the furthest away from the civilization and culture of the province.”<sup>134</sup> In other words, the utility of Caesar’s identifications was tested in similar circumstances to their creation. Ideas related to lifestyle, origins, and martial strength would intersect with Caesar’s use of the Rhine to make it an ethnographic division.

### Caesar and the Rhine – Intervening Years

If the campaign against Ariovistus saw the creation of the Rhine policy, subsequent events cemented it. Caesar continued to secure the frontier zone by campaigning against border peoples other than the Germani. Caesar moved his men into winter quarters within the territory of the Sequani and personally departed for Italy, as he had other responsibilities there. Most commentators see his garrisoning of troops within Gallic territory, rather than the province, as a provocation to the Belgae, the inhabitants at the further end of the area.<sup>135</sup> Some argue that this and his subsequent campaigns were due to Caesar’s personal ambitions for a second consulship in Rome, and that the *BG*’s characterizations of the Gauls reflect Caesar’s pretexts for further involvement.<sup>136</sup> If Caesar was acting in typical proconsular fashion, he would seek a *deditio* from each belligerent group, and establish explicit ties with any others, in effect expanding the frontier.<sup>137</sup> The motive for wintering in conquered territory was likely to secure the

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<sup>134</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.1, transl. Carolyn Hammond, Oxford, 1996.

<sup>135</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.54-2.3. Caesar gives several for the Belgic revolt. Perhaps most significantly, Caesar notes that the Belgae were stirred by Galli who did not want Rome to threaten them like the Germani did (and again inclusive language: “Germanos . . . in Gallia”). In other words, he implied a frontier threat.

<sup>136</sup> Jane F. Gardner, “The ‘Gallic Menace’ in Caesar’s Propaganda,” *Greece & Rome* (October, 1983), 181-189; for a more cultural view, see Louis Rawlings, “Caesar’s Portrayal of Gauls as Warriors,” in *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments*, ed. Kathryn Welch and Anton Powell (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1998).

<sup>137</sup> In this respect, the Gallic Wars appear almost a microcosm of Roman imperialism in general, as “some real but not very formidable dangers to its outlying possessions, [caused Rome to react] with such force that not only were these possessions secured but extensive and valuable new ones were acquired.” Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, 211.

frontier against further attack and ensure the integrity of the Sequani, as they occupied a roadway into Gaul. Whether, as Caesar claimed, his campaign against the Belgae was pre-emptive, even a victory against some of them made the frontier more secure by discouraging interference with Caesar's dispositions. The Rhine does not feature as prominently in Book Two as Book One, but its evolution into an ethnographic determinant began with the challenge of the Belgae.

Caesar's new opponents had several characteristics of note. They were a people of Germanic descent that had occupied their territory generations before and were remembered for having repelled the Cimbri.<sup>138</sup> The Belgae were hybridized in that they had mixed identities with a Gallic way of life yet clearly of different lineage than the frontier zone Galli. The political nature of Caesar's distinction again appears after the defeat of one of the Belgic *civitates* in the field against Caesar in 57 B.C. At Diviciacus' urging, Caesar showed leniency to the Bellovaci at least partly because "the Bellovaci were forever faithful and on friendly terms with the community of the Aedui (*Bellovacos omni tempore in fide atque amicitia civitatis Haeduae fuisse*)."<sup>139</sup> The important factor for the proconsul was the web of relationships tying the frontier peoples to Rome, and diplomatic attachment to the Aedui could trump ethnic or racial attachment to the Belgae. This campaign had a benefit for Caesar as well in that he could employ his patronage to make the Belgic Remi a second pillar of Rome's security in Gaul.

Caesar's second year ends so successfully that he feels secure in rebuffing envoys from across the Rhine, whom the Belgae evidently courted: "The fame of this war spread

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<sup>138</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 2.4. The recall of the Cimbri on this occasion emphasizes the Belgae's strength, which becomes explicit with the list of peoples and soldiers that follows it. The inventory (2.5) is atypical for the *BG*.

<sup>139</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 2.14.



among the barbarians [*ad barbaros* – those outside the frontier, likely the rest of the Belgae], and was so impressive that the peoples living on the other side of the Rhine [*nationibus . . . trans Rhenum*] sent envoys to Caesar; they promised to send hostages and to obey his commands.”<sup>140</sup> The following year (56 B.C.), there was a brief struggle with communities in the Alps over the passes into Gaul. Caesar afterwards thought he “had every reason to think that the whole of Gaul had been subdued.”<sup>141</sup> The Acquitani, living southeast of Celtica, were the final group on the fringes of the frontier to pose any sort of threat, so Caesar returned to Gaul even as his *legati* did most of the campaigning. This would be his last attempt to leave as he decided to secure Britannica next.<sup>142</sup> In 55, however, the Usipetes and Tencteri crossed the Rhine, drawing Caesar back to that part of Gaul.

### Phase Two – The Rhine Policy Revisited

There are two specific events discussed in the *BG* where Caesar concentrates on the contrast between Gallus and Germanus. The first is his campaign against Ariovistus, which led to the creation of his Rhine policy. After departing the convention of the Gallic leaders, Caesar conducted forced marches to the fortified city of Vesontio in anticipation of Ariovistus’ advance. Once there, his *legati* – those young men of good birth, high class, or close friendship who sought political ties or advancement through military experience – nearly sparked a mutiny. They panicked after hearing traders and

<sup>140</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 2.35, transl. Carolyn Hammond, Oxford, 1996. Whichever group this incident refers to, Caesar seems to consider this moment the end of any direct threat to the frontier.

<sup>141</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 3.7, transl. Carolyn Hammond, Oxford, 1996.

<sup>142</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 4.20. The trip to Britain seems to be somewhat opportunistic, a consequence of his fighting with the Veneti. Somewhat confusingly, Caesar claims that Britons aided his enemies (which would fit with his duty to ensure frontier security) while also saying that the Galli knew little about the island. Strabo suggests that Caesar sparked the conflict by endangering the Veneti trade monopoly. Strabo *Geogr.*, 4.4.1.

the Sequani described the strength, size, skill, and bravery of the coming Germani.<sup>143</sup> Caesar shamed the army as a whole into holding firm, largely by emphasizing the superiority of valor (especially Roman *virtus*) over the lesser quality of cunning, which had been enough to defeat the Gauls.<sup>144</sup> This lesser quality, possessed in abundance by the Germani, did not indicate *humanitas* as valor did, perhaps because it lacked the connection to property and the moral fiber of those willing to defend it (and thus the state). The mutiny not only let the *BG* emphasize the ultimate military virtue of Romans, it also added to the characterization of the Germani as chaotic bandits. They might be strong and skillful, but they did not have the military virtue of Rome or even the Galli. The proper, valorous way to fight was in pitched battles facing the enemy – *virtus* was important because it was the spirit to stand one's ground in a thunderous and bloody melee, flight from which could be suicidal.<sup>145</sup> The Helvetii fought openly, in a phalanx, as did the Belgae and others with sufficient bravery to defend themselves and their property.<sup>146</sup> Although Caesar consistently claims that the fighting spirit of the Germani was the greater, theirs was the quality of fierceness (*feri*).

The second incident, the arrival of the Usipetes and Tencteri, pulled Caesar back to the Rhine in 55 B.C., which would remain his principal theatre of operations for the next two years (excepting his expeditions to Britain). It is worth reemphasizing that

<sup>143</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.39.

<sup>144</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.40; Sall. *Cat.*, 37. The Romans generally equated martial character, especially valor, with moral worth. They were proud of their willingness to assist their allies (*socii*), form military pacts (*foeda*), and avenge their friends (*amicitia*).

<sup>145</sup> Nathan Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi; Military Defeat and Aristocratic Competition in the Middle and Late Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 95-132.

<sup>146</sup> Polybius describes the Celtic infantry as fighting naked or with a light cloak, as does Tacitus the German infantry. Caesar describes both the Helvetians and Ariovistus' Germans as fighting in a phalanx – a well-ordered formation of Greek origin that must have been universal in Gaul by that time. There appears to be a clash of images, horde versus army, which spans at least two and a half centuries. Polybius is the most detailed and the earliest. See Polyb., 2.28-2.29.



Caesar was the first Roman governor to campaign beyond the groups of Celtica. Within the frontier zone, Caesar operated within an established web of ties with many of the groups – the Aedui and Allobroges, in particular – who had long standing relations with Rome. In the expanded campaigns around Celtica, he strengthened Rome's position by patronizing the Remi, forging another pillar to support an expanded frontier zone, and supporting various leaders in other *civitates*. One of the stronger groups in northeastern Gaul, the Treveri, were not as easily won over. They had allies of their own and like the Sequani occupied territory adjacent to the Rhine. The Usipetes and Tencteri, entering Gaul either because of invitations by the Treveri or possibly pressure from the Suebi, were initially willing to come on Rome's terms, much as the Helvetii had offered. Caesar rejected the Germani's offer as he had that of the Helvetii, although he made a more complete example in 55 with his total massacre of these newcomers in a surprise attack.<sup>147</sup> The arrival of the Usipetes and Tencteri sparked a renewed focus on the Rhine and the peoples near it that would culminate in a systematic attempt to distinguish between Gallus and Germanus.

As proconsul, Caesar possessed the authority to carry war as far as necessary to ensure Roman security and dominion. The matter of the Usipetes and Tencteri convinced him to stem the flow of Germani by crossing the Rhine himself: "now that he had seen how easily the German[i] were induced to invade Gaul [*ut in Galliam venirent*], he

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<sup>147</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 4.13-4.15. He stuck to his Rhine policy (4.8): "there could be no friendship between them and himself if they remained in Gaul." The campaign against Ariovistus had been politically difficult, but Caesar's slaughter of the migrants, whether out of ambition (he was preparing to invade Britain) or as an example to other groups, evidently brought home more criticism. His excuse, that they broke the truce first with a cavalry raid, has not generally been accepted. See Anton Powell, "Julius Caesar and the Presentation of Massacre," in *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments*, ed. Kathryn Welch and Anton Powell (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1998).

wanted them to experience fear on their own account – when they realized that the army of the Roman people was both capable of crossing the Rhine and brave enough to venture it.”<sup>148</sup> Caesar emphasizes the security problem through his pursuit of the surviving Germanic cavalry, whose continued existence made the victory (and massacre) incomplete.<sup>149</sup> In accordance with Roman *dignitas*, Caesar decided not to cross by boats, a means typical of his opponents, but by constructing a bridge – a monument that could demonstrate Rome’s ability and willingness to take war to the enemy anywhere the enemy called home.<sup>150</sup> The invasion lasted several days, but Caesar withdrew after inflicting little damage, largely due to reports that the Suebi were gathering.<sup>151</sup> He would similarly withdraw from Germania in a second campaign during the revolt of the Treveri and their allies two years later while blaming supply problems.<sup>152</sup>

These Roman counter-invasions highlight two important facts. First, Caesar revisited his Rhine policy in 55 B.C. partly because of the similar circumstances to those in 58, with the political character of the frontier being of considerable importance. Caesar encountered one Germanic group in his forays across the Rhine which acquiesced

<sup>148</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 4.16, transl. Carolyn Hammond, Oxford, 1996. It is notable that Caesar does not describe the territory he is entering as *Germania*, and his envoys demand the surrender of those whom had attacked “himself and Gaul.”

<sup>149</sup> The practice of eliminating all belligerents one way or another was typical. In the Gallic War of 125–121 B.C., for example, the conflict grew to include the Allobroges specifically because they aided Rome’s enemies.

<sup>150</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 4.17. The invasion apparently had the desired effect, as the Treveri could not attract any Germanic support in the next year when the real conflagration began. For Caesar’s manner of fighting, see Adrian Goldsworthy, “‘Instinctive Genius’ The Depiction of Caesar the General,” in *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments*, ed. Kathryn Welch and Anton Powell (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1998).

<sup>151</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 4.19, transl. Carolyn Hammond, Oxford, 1996. “[T]hinking he had advanced far enough to serve both honor and interest . . .” He ravaged the countryside, to little more than perhaps psychological effect. Cf. Strabo *Geogr.*, 7.2.1; Malcolm Todd, *The Northern Barbarians 100 BC – AD 300* (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd, 1975), 112–116. Ancient authors sometimes imply that German villages consisted of nothing but wagons. Archaeological studies have demonstrated “enduring communities” but confirmed a significantly lower concentration of people and buildings in areas immediately to the west of the Rhine.

<sup>152</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 6.29.



to his patronage. The Ubii were by their own admission of Germanic lineage and lived east of the Rhine, but because they accepted Caesar's authority and gave hostages during his first invasion he treated them as friendly parties in both invasions. Any group that accepted the commands of Rome's representative ceased to be a frontier threat. The second fact revolves around military virtue. Caesar may have withdrawn in 55 because he found little to fight over – he mentions “inciting fear in the [offending] Germani” and accepting offers of friendship from others, but departs when learning of more gathering to attack.<sup>153</sup> He almost certainly withdrew in 53 to avoid a repeat of his experiences with the Eburones during the revolt of 54. These experiences included grueling irregular warfare for which the Romans were ill-equipped – the quintessential “barbarian” tactic of relying on cunning and not courage. Instead of forming his lines to allow the scattered enemy to pick off individual soldiers, Caesar moved cautiously and kept his forces in loose groups – “Caesar preferred to overlook a chance to inflict injury . . . rather than inflict it but do some harm to his soldiers in the process.”<sup>154</sup> In neither case did Caesar advance into a potentially disastrous and unnecessary engagement with the Suebi. The Rhine policy was always centered on maintaining control of Gaul and not on fighting the Germani. Roman forces would fight to protect or expand Rome's interests, but unless the Germani crossed the Rhine or formed a proper battle line Caesar apparently had other priorities.

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<sup>153</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 4.17-4.19.

<sup>154</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 6.34, transl. Carolyn Hammond, Oxford, 1996. This passage offers one of the few instances where the *BG* measures the value of one group directly against another. Caesar defeated the Eburones by calling for Gallic reinforcements to attack their territory while they kept him on the defensive: “In this way the lives of Ga[lli], rather than those of legionary soldiers, were put at risk in the woods.”

## Civilization – Degrees of Difference

The *BG* includes descriptions of peoples and customs throughout its narrative, but the concentration of such material increases in the later books (Four, Five, and Six) when Caesar is almost always in less familiar territory. Specialists like Strabo might employ (if not accept) general “racial” categories originating in a theory of climatological determinism, in which case the Germani were viewed as larger, fiercer, and ruddier than the Galli, yet otherwise much the same.<sup>155</sup> The peoples of the colder northern zone were perceived to possess limited intelligence, impulse control, or craft ability, and tall frames, pale faces, and deep voices.<sup>156</sup> A people’s perceived *mores* was another standard, and orators might concentrate on racial stereotypes that drew from a fairly common set of negative qualities.<sup>157</sup> In either case, the new people would be known in some basic sense that implied a distinctiveness of physical form and general habit. Distinctiveness in whatever sense might attract the interest of the intellectual gentry with the promise of quaint customs or an unusual pedigree.<sup>158</sup> The *BG* was a rhetorical document and its overwhelmingly political focus reflects Caesar’s concern for his relations to Gallic groups upon whom he was at times reliant for material support.

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<sup>155</sup> Strabo *Geogr.*, 4.7.2. The belief that environment determined some characteristics of the native peoples remained dominant throughout Classical times. The Mediterranean was of course the best, allowing them (especially the Romans) to have the most effective balance of strength and intelligence.

<sup>156</sup> Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens*, 60; for the Galli, see Strabo *Geogr.*, 4.2; for the Germani, see Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 427-439. Strabo implies the theory in his overarching description of the Galli, while Isaac argues that, through Roman history as a whole, the Germani are the archetype of the northerner.

<sup>157</sup> Cic. *Scaur.*, 17.33. One of the more scathing descriptions of provincials, Cicero makes frequent uses of stereotypes such as untrustworthiness, complacency, and similar. Although his principal subject is Sardinia (he is defending his brother, Quintus, from charges of corruption), he compares the “national character” of several groups.

<sup>158</sup> Cic. *Q Fr.*, 2.16, transl. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, New York, 1986. Talking about Britain to his brother, Cicero says: “You evidently have some splendid literary material – the places, the natural phenomena and scenes, the customs, the peoples you fight, and, last but not least, the commander-in-chief!”



The Galli were ultimately those peoples in Gaul, and Gaul was in turn the region inhabited by Galli. Although circular, such close association fit into Roman ideas of autochthony. A group inhabiting a piece of land for an extended period of time would possess legitimizing cultural traditions that connected the public order with their ancestors. The idea of the *pax deorum* was in this vein because the chain of ancestors would inspire the best men, those land-owning aristocrats who had property to defend and the virtue to do so, to follow their example in all custom..., including the proper cultic conduct which pleased the gods and brought prosperity. The social and political system embodied in the *civitas*, its economic foundation, and the connections between communities all indicated a moral order best realized by continuity in *mores*. Cicero, for example, insisted that:

Nor indeed can any man think otherwise, unless there be any who thinks that there is no such thing as divine power and control, who is not stirred by the greatness of our empire or . . . by the wisdom of our ancestors, who themselves paid strict observance to worship and rights and auspices, and have handed them on to us their descendents.<sup>159</sup>

For Caesar, the test was not actually descent – the Belgae, Treveri, and others were of Germanic pedigree and Caesar was aware of Gallic communities in what he identified as Germania. The key was the perceived way of life. West meant Gallia, agriculture, commerce, *humanitas*, and dominion of Rome, while East meant Germania, herding, no commerce, a sort of simplicity, and a fierce, independent spirit. It is these themes that Caesar ties to his Rhine policy to distinguish Germani from Galli.

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<sup>159</sup> Cic. *Milo.*, 31.1, transl. N. H. Watts, London, 1931. Religious rites had an important place in Roman public life. See P. A. Brunt, *Social Conflicts in the Roman Republic* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1971), 58-67; Elizabeth Rawson, "Religion and Politics in the Late Second Century B.C. at Rome," in *Roman Culture and Society: Collected Papers*, 149-168.

In 58 B.C., one chieftain with his followers caused grave disruption within Gaul. Caesar took extreme measures to prevent a similar occurrence in 55, to no avail. In 54, the Treveri added their strength to a string of revolts near the Rhine. This revolt, occurring between Caesar's two counter-invasions, proved especially dangerous because Germanic assistance did materialize. Coordinated attacks by several groups nearly succeeded in eliminating the Roman army's winter quarters, and inflicted considerable casualties. The Nervii, a community whom Caesar more than once thought defeated, contributed to the revolt and almost overran the camp commanded by Cicero's brother, Quintus.<sup>160</sup> With the exception of the Caesar's first invasion in Book Four, the *BG* tends to detail the individual Gallic *civitates* while treating the Germani as a single force until the revolt of the Treveri in Book Five. This revolt in 54 would lead to a new emphasis on cultural characteristics over geographic origin for identification. The topical change occurring in Books Five and Six is especially striking because the two books are continuous. The story seamlessly connects during the winter of 54. A dedicated ethnographic portion first appears in Book Six, which splits the narrative and conveniently draws the audience's attention from Caesar's second retreat from the relatively new Germania (first called such in Book Four).<sup>161</sup> The *BG* now juxtaposes the

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<sup>160</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 2.28 ("almost wiped out"), 5.39-45 (they resurge in sufficient strength to besiege Quintus Cicero's winter camp), 6.3 (Caesar defeats them in one lightning strike), 7.75 (Vercingetorix levied 5,000 men from the Nervii for his army). The Nervii were one of the newly encountered groups, as Cicero's correspondence (54 B.C.) indicates: "For I don't know where your Nervii live or how distantly from us." Cic. *Q Fr.*, 3.6. The Nervii had attacked Quintus and almost overwhelmed his camp during the revolt of 54. Cicero is an important case, for he had at one time (in 59) prepared to write his own geography, so one might assume he would have the best information during his time. Cic. *Att.*, 2.6.

<sup>161</sup> T.P. Wiseman, "The Publication of the *De Bello Gallico*," in *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments*, ed. Kathryn Welch and Anton Powell (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1998). A similar concern likely caused Book Five to end in the "middle" of the action. As an interesting aside, this section also includes interesting trivia like a bestiary. The inclusion of such broader curiosities may have been to dilute the audience's expectation of a battle with the Suebi that never comes.



Germani and Galli as ethnographic groups instead of individual *civitates*, and generalizations that sporadically appeared in earlier books, particularly the description of the Suebi, become summarized.<sup>162</sup> The ethnographic portion expands older stereotypes with additional details of the peoples and their customs.

Following the differences described in the section, Caesar's standard refrain gains increasing strength: the Galli were more civilized than the Germani, with the Rhine separating the two groups. Where the Galli were viewed in terms of *civitates*, the Germani had only the most basic political system of magistrates and leading men uniting clans.<sup>163</sup> Access to traders, the cultivation of land, and the aristocratic culture promoted by such economic activities clearly marked the two peoples as separate. Caesar described the descent of the Galli, as given by the druids, from the deity Dis (Pluto), indicating autochthony. While this could be claimed for the Galli of Celtica, hybridized peoples like the Treveri clearly could not claim the same lineage. The ethnographic section of Book Six does not address them directly, but strongly implies that all groups west of the Rhine were more Galli than Germani.<sup>164</sup> The Rhine was now seen to divide peoples in terms of their ethnic identity – or their *lingua, institutes, legibus* – and Caesar examines the basic organizational traits of Gallic societies versus those of the Germanic.

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<sup>162</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 4.1. This has occasionally been advanced as a proof from internal evidence as to the *BG*'s periodic composition because it indicates more specific knowledge as the Books progress.

<sup>163</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 6.22, 6.24.

<sup>164</sup> This implication is perhaps strongest when Caesar suggests reasons for the Germani to avoid private land ownership. Caes. *B Gall.*, 6.22, transl. Carolyn Hammond, Oxford, 1996: "to prevent people [from] adopting agriculture in place of . . . war; or trying to obtain large estates, the strong driving the weak out of their properties; or building too carefully with the intention of avoiding extreme cold and heat; or to stop the desire for money springing up, for from this arise factions and dissent; or finally, to keep the ordinary people content, since each man can see that his own possessions are equal to those of the men in power." Not only are many of these reasons actual features of the Roman view of *humanitas* that seems reflected in the Gallic way of life, but if one assumes a very close, even determinative, correlation between agriculture and such traits, then most of the Belgae, Britons, Aquitani and the like would seem more similar to the Galli of Celtica.

If one recalls the *pax deorum*, it comes as no surprise that the *BG* includes religion as part of its comparison. The Galli were clearly more like the Romans in Caesar's treatment with easy identification between deities. The Galli were deeply religious and worshipped a cross-section of the Olympians: Mercury, the divine messenger with strong commercial associations, was foremost, implying Gallic involvement in trade; Apollo, whom Caesar explicitly associates with medicine, but may be implying other attributes such as poetry, indicating a certain sophistication in science and art; Mars, the god of war to whom the Galli dedicated all their spoils and sacrificial victims, recalling their previous fame in war, now lessened; Jupiter, a deity of the heavens, perhaps implying cosmic order and thus order within their own societies; and finally Minerva, goddess of wisdom and craft skills, indicating some level of technical skill.<sup>165</sup> In describing their basic religious practices only in terms of Roman gods, Caesar can imply among the Galli practices familiar to his audience while suggesting the quality of *pietas*, a positive quality related to one fulfilling one's responsibilities within society much as *fides* governed foreign agreements. The comparison with Germanic spiritual practices is especially telling, because according to Caesar they did not worship deities beyond those which they could see, such as fire or the sun.<sup>166</sup> Thus, through the objects of their devotion, the Galli display a degree of *humanitas* that the Germani do not.

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<sup>165</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 6.18. This passage may not be anything more than what it is, and most scholars accept it as Caesar identifying Celtic deities by their Roman equivalents. Mars and Jupiter would be expected in this case, but Mercury and Minerva at least imply a relatively sophisticated economy. It is possible that Caesar is actually characterizing the Galli by personifying their way of life through their deities. Either way, it likely made the Galli more familiar than before through association. Many of these embody Gallic characteristics that have already been discussed, but their technical skills would become an issue in the revolt of Vercingetorix in 52 B.C.

<sup>166</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 6.21. Also, they "have no druids to preside over religious matters." Without informed worship of the gods, they lacked Rome's ability to determine heaven's will (*fas*) through any but the most basic means, as Ariovistus did in waiting for favorable divination prior to engaging Caesar (1.50).



Other traits also mark the difference between the two peoples. A secure frontier was necessary because the Gauls were flighty. This trait coexisted with the good sense to restrict certain information to their elite, to organize themselves behind patrons, and to protect property brought to a marriage, all of which were also venerable Roman customs.<sup>167</sup> Many evidently knew Latin or Greek which also emphasizes their participation within the Greco-Roman world.<sup>168</sup> Outside of farming, commerce is the economic activity most frequently cited by Caesar, and his earliest description of the Galli included the indirect relationship between trade and a people's martial quality.<sup>169</sup> Prejudices against excessive luxury aside, Caesar's emphasis on trade reinforced the achievement of *humanitas* and the formation of *civitates* tied to of Rome.<sup>170</sup> The core of the ancient prejudice blamed physical pleasures and soft living, characterized especially by wine, for a people's degradation in fighting ability.<sup>171</sup> Yet even among the most belligerent, such as the Treveri, sociopolitical stability encouraged wealth via trade over the Germanic habit (and ideal) of daring banditry.<sup>172</sup> The Germani did not allow private ownership of land, nor did they practice true agriculture. They instead subsisted on

<sup>167</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 6.19-20.

<sup>168</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.29, 5.48, 6.14. Caesar gives several examples of Greek "letters," which may or may not mean the actual language.

<sup>169</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.1. Cf. Strabo *Geogr.*, 4.4.1; Balsdon, *Romans and Enemies*, 66; Cunliffe, *The Oxford Illustrated Prehistory of Europe*, 350-353. The flow of goods was not quite as simplistic as Caesar maintained, and the difference was one of an economy of prestige goods versus trade in bulk, especially of wine and animals. The Romans likely borrowed this association from the Greeks (who said much the same about the Macedonians and others). See Williams, *Beyond the Rubicon*, 61.

<sup>170</sup> Cunliffe, *The Oxford Illustrated Prehistory of Europe*, 428. Following the trail of material goods, the "real" frontier lay nearer the Elbe not the Rhine, as Caesar seems to discover when meeting the Ubii.

<sup>171</sup> Catherine Torigian, "The *Logos* of Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* especially as revealed in its First Five Chapters," in *Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments*, ed. Kathryn Welch and Anton Powell (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1998). Torigian suggests that the relationship with wine and military spirit was intended to promote Roman superiority. The Romans, despite consuming such goods, could still defeat those who did not consume them.

<sup>172</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 1.18, 4.2, 6.23. Dumnorix gained much of his wealth and influence from control of taxes and tolls, a position that required the awarding of public contracts as much as armed force. The Germani had no political superstructure and little interest in traders except to sell slaves, not even for pack animals. Thus, contact between Rome and the Germani would likely always be conflict.

hunting and herding, “clothing” themselves in skins and consuming meat and milk.<sup>173</sup>

The same paradigm was applied to Britain where “the most civilized are those who live in Kent . . . their way of life is much the same as that of the Ga[lli]” and “inland, the people for the most part do not plant corn-crops, but live on milk and meat and clothe themselves in animal skins.”<sup>174</sup> In other words, as far as the *BG* is concerned, the Galli are civilized compared to any other group Caesar encounters, and their way of life was typified by their social and economic practices.

### Two Classes – Divisions Among the Galli

For all his rhetoric against the Germani, Caesar most often fought against the Galli, and he ascribed certain unflattering characteristics to them. One theme, introduced in Diviciacus’ speech, is the bipolar nature of Gallic life. There were two factions to everything. This claim of constant division conveniently reduces the threatening image of the Galli while explaining their habit of revolting – they have not broken *fides*, a would-be chieftain just seized power. This second aspect regarding divisions in Gallic society becomes clarified in the ethnography, with two aristocratic groups, the knights (*equites*) and the druids, discussed. The druids were the scholars, teachers, public authorities, and overseers of sacrifices, in essence the order generally inclined to respectable practices.<sup>175</sup> His description of the second order, the knights, could be that of the old warrior aristocracy, which was being displaced by a growing land-owning class. The only form of power they know is that derived from their body of retainers whom they

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<sup>173</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 4.1, 6.22-6.23. Specifics are added in Book Six, but much of the material is identical to descriptions of the Suebi in Book Four.

<sup>174</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 5.12-5.14, transl. Carolyn Hammond, Oxford, 1996. “Civilized” includes both farming and trade (coinage).

<sup>175</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 6.13-6.14.



lead into battle, an annual event prior to Caesar's coming.<sup>176</sup> There may be an implicit comparison with Ariovistus and *ius belli* in this description.

When Caesar appointed friendly leaders for local *civitates*, he chose the descendents of former rulers.<sup>177</sup> It may be that the druids and pro-Roman landowners were closely associated classes. Prestige and economic wealth could reinforce each other as sources of power and influence, and both groups were similar enough to Rome's own elite to compete within the frontier zone.<sup>178</sup> This was advantageous to Rome, because both prestige and agriculture made a *civitas* secure and tractable through honors and trade, increasing Rome's influence through her ability to support local elites. The only specifically mentioned druid, Diviciacus, was certainly prominent among the Aedui for Caesar's favor, and Caesar again emphasizes Diviciacus' appeal to the Senate against Ariovistus in the ethnography. Caesar likely intended that the Knights would be identified with those who had sacked Rome and invaded Italy in the fourth century. The Galli had become weaker because of the prominence of the less bellicose faction, but they had also become worthwhile allies.<sup>179</sup> The *BG* gives a much shorter description of

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<sup>176</sup> Caes. *B Gall.*, 6.15.

<sup>177</sup> It seems that this practice contributed to the revolt of 54 B.C. A descendent of an ancient ruler of the Carnutes, whom Caesar had "restored . . . to the status of his ancestors," was killed. Also, the appointed ruler over the Senones was chased out. Indutiomarus had received Caesar's public support, but material support went to his rival Cingetorix. Indutiomarus reacted badly, and the Treveri led the Eburones in unexpected rebellion. Caesar 5.25, 5.54. Caesar also claims (6.12) that his support allowed the Remi to supplant the Sequani as the second leading power of Gaul (the Aedui being the other).

<sup>178</sup> The identification of pro and anti-Roman parties with native oligarchs/Republicans and "adventurers" (the would-be chieftains like Orgetorix) has not convinced everyone. Holmes, *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul*, 520-523. If one identifies Caesar's druids with a land-owning/oligarchic faction, and the knights with the former aristocratic warrior class and their retainers, however, the *BG* seems to promote the former as worthwhile allies for Rome to maintain its dominant position among the Gallic *civitates*.

<sup>179</sup> This weakness was relative. The frequent Gallic defeats and Caesar's portrayal of their leaders at the convention do not offer a flattering picture. On the other hand, after the revolt of Vercingetorix in 52 B.C. forces Caesar to conduct some difficult and lengthy sieges, he concedes that they possessed considerable ability: "the Ga[lli] used every kind of ingenuity to counter the extraordinary bravery of our soldiers. They

the knights than the druids, indicating Caesar's preference for the druids over the warriors. This preference regarding a class of society re-emphasizes that Caesar's ethnic divisions depended upon political relationships, that membership within a *civitas* was more meaningful than one's *genus*, because the differences between the social classes lay, essentially, with their customs.

Caesar's overarching goal was not to define Gaul or German in ethnic terms. He sought to strengthen Rome's position within Gaul by drawing together as many communities as possible into the frontier system. This would serve his own political interests as he could claim credit for defeating real or potential enemies and attaching additional communities to Rome through treaties and hostages, who would come to share the standards of the Roman aristocracy. The identity and habits of the peoples in the frontier zone mattered insofar as their political, social, and economic characteristics intersected to demonstrate *humanitas*. Other traits such as language, religion, and military virtue mattered in Roman perception for their ability to maintain a proper community and, perhaps through patronage, for elevation within the political hierarchy.

Caesar's Rhine policy initially created two camps based upon this hierarchy of communities. The Gallic *civitates* deserved protection and inclusion, while the Germanic chief Ariovistus did not. The characteristics that underscored their worth came more into the foreground during Caesar's return to the Rhine side of the frontier, from 55 to 53 B.C. Lineage and other traits that determined *what* people were could be overwritten by the memberships that determined *who* they were, and sustained contact with peoples on either side of his proclaimed border caused Caesar to take this extra step. His eventual

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are an extremely resourceful people [*genus* – a variation on *gens*], and particularly talented at copying and putting into practice anything they are taught." Caes. *B Gall.*, 7.22.



ethnography in Book Six would support the Rhine policy by demonstrating that the Galli had some degree of *humanitas*. Thus, the way in which peoples lived increased in significance as what had originated in a border dispute between the Sequani and Ariovistus in 58 began to solidify into a geographic, even a national, border by 53.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to outline an evolution in Julius Caesar's use of the Rhine River during the Gallic Wars of 58 to 52 B.C. It has argued that Caesar first used the Rhine River as a political division between the Galli and the Germani, within the context of the concept of the frontier zone. Assuming the periodic composition of Caesar's own narrative, the *BG*, this study then argued that a general Roman paradigm involving membership in political units and a shared value system expressed through a certain way of life further differentiated the two peoples at a later point in the conflict. This study has emphasized the *BG* over the Gallic Wars and sought to employ the text in a fashion consistent with its contemporary nature as a public document. In so doing, some broad characteristics that informed the Roman perception of foreign identity have appeared. The traits include autochthony, a certain degree of social and political sophistication based on agriculture, and some defined relationship within the hierarchy of *civitates* which revolved around Rome. These characteristics became tied to Caesar's use of the Rhine in the *BG* and thus were applied positively to the Galli and negatively to the Germani.

The evolution of the Rhine from legalistic boundary to culture barrier argued by this thesis depends upon the observations and generalizations contained within the *BG*. As noted in the introduction, this study relies upon the theory of periodic composition,



according to which each book of the text was completed individually soon after the events recorded. The central point of this study has not been to demonstrate the likelihood of this process aside from the barest implications of proconsular habits, Caesar's political interests, and Cicero's letters. The changes in Caesar's use of the Rhine from legalistic boundary to cultural barrier that have been argued would nevertheless demonstrate the lack of a complete plan or definitive use of the river at any one point within the text. So, in a limited sense, this paper presents supporting evidence for the periodic composition of the *BG*.

The first chapter of this study has focused on the Rhine River as a political boundary in the context of a threat to the frontier zone. Caesar adopted a policy that the Germani would not be allowed to enter Gaul. This chapter focused upon Book One, in which the Rhine appears as the border of one people's territory, specifically that of the Sequani. Through the Sequani's inclusion in frontier affairs, the Rhine was the *finis* of the frontier zone as a whole. The crossing of the Germani under Ariovistus brought an unaffiliated people into an area undergoing its own social and political changes. The failure of Ariovistus to adapt to the conventions of the frontier zone provided Caesar with the justification to repel the Germani from Gaul. The negative portrayal of this disruptive chieftain was the object of the second half of Book One. Since Ariovistus would not respect Rome's central place, Caesar had every obligation to protect those who would, namely the Galli of Celtica. The Rhine serves as the territorial limit for this region and makes the identification of both the Galli and Germani immediately clear. This chapter also introduces the various senses in which Caesar speaks of Gaul, primarily as a large region that possessed distinct peoples (Acquitani, Galli, and Belgae) ethnically separate

through customs (laws, institutions, and language). The Galli had two identities, the regional one of living within Gaul, and the narrower one of living based on their ethnic divisions, such as Celtica. In either sense, the land of the Galli, Gallia, was bounded by the Rhine on its eastern side.

The second chapter focuses on the consequences of a second phase of Roman activity along the Rhine with a second group of Germani in Book Four. This phase of the Gallic Wars revolves around the defense of an expanded frontier zone that had extended along the Rhine's entire length and amid peoples who were not the same relation to the Galli of the original zone. The interests of the *BG* shift from predominantly political identities reliant upon ties to Rome to an attempt to systematically outline cultural characteristics that determined *humanitas*, the customs assumed by the Roman aristocracy to denote civilization. The Rhine River received a new geographic status as it no longer just split states but also cultures. Caesar's identification of the Galli and Germani in broad terms emphasized voluntary elements such as their customs and social structures, instead of determinative factors such as environment or lineage. The organization of politically unified groups (*civitates*) based on a public class involved in agriculture and trade became the standard to distinguish between Galli and Germani. The common structures underlying Caesar's distinction by Book Six set the basis for the Rhine to become an ethnographic border, as increased involvement of peoples to its west in the Roman network would emphasize the values of the landowning class. This would in turn make the Galli effectively a separate people from the Germani.

The approach taken by this paper has downplayed Caesar's own political career in Rome in that it views the Gallic Wars within the context of the frontier zone concept.



Admittedly, this approach minimizes some elements of Caesar's command, particularly the consequences of his prolonged campaigning in Rome's political arena. This was required by this paper's focus on how Caesar perceived the inhabitants of the frontier, how he portrayed them in the *BG*, and, to some extent, what these portrayals indicate about how the Romans in general viewed these peoples. The broader dimensions of the Gallic Wars as a frontier conflict within the political theater of the Late Republic deserve further research. It is hoped that this study's discussion of the characteristics of identification and perception will assist in future endeavors in that direction.

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